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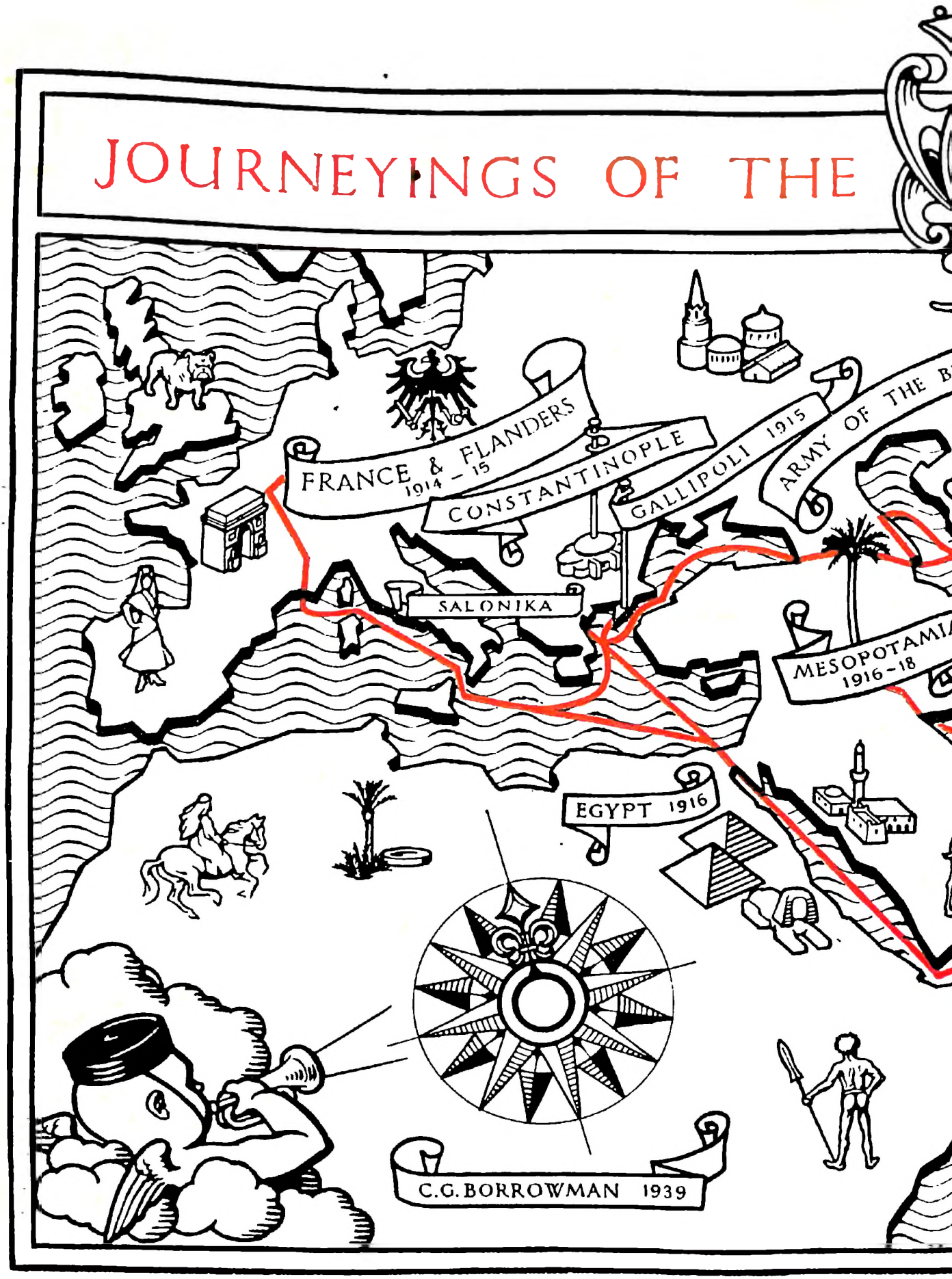
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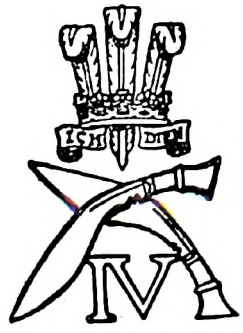

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A HISTORY OF THE
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1857-1937

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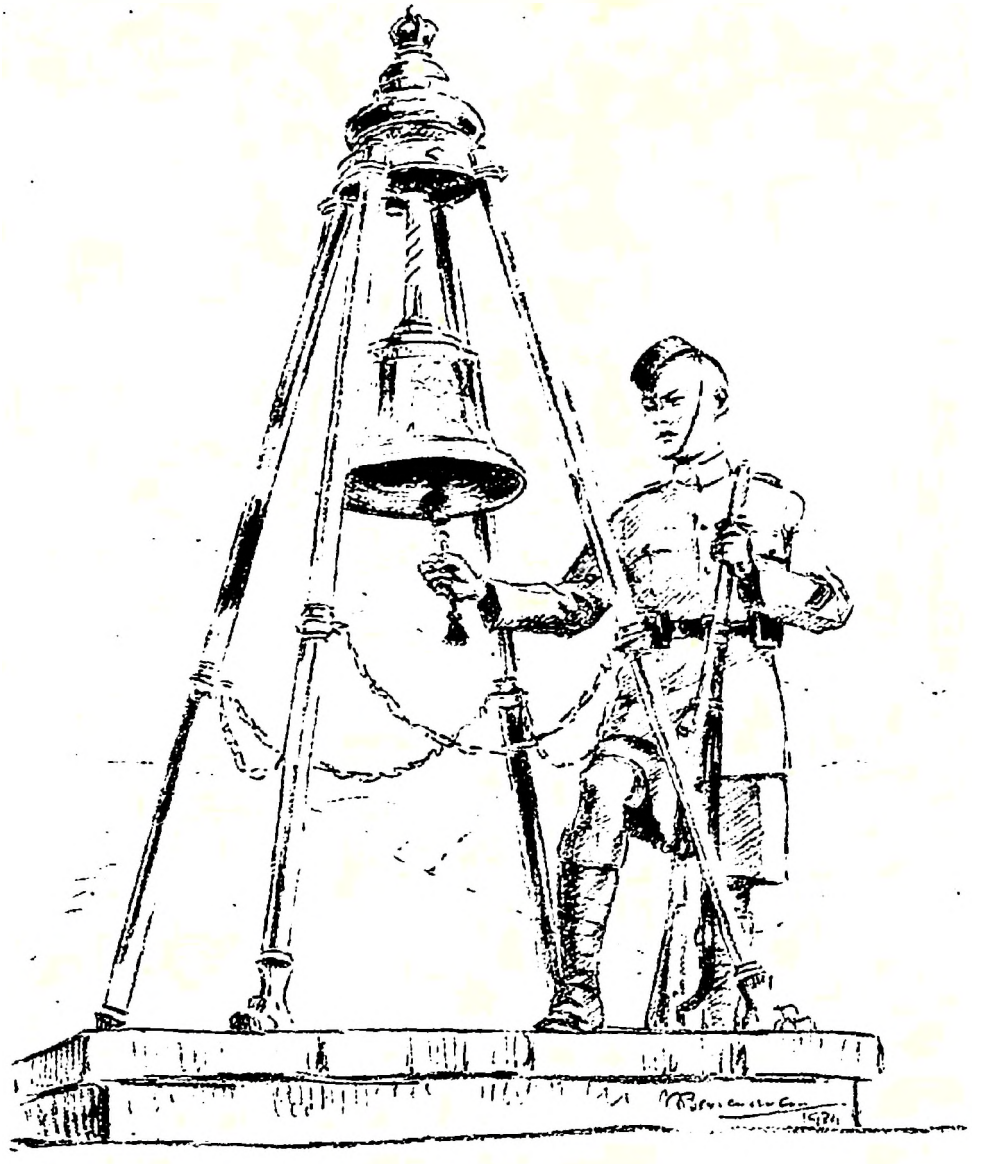
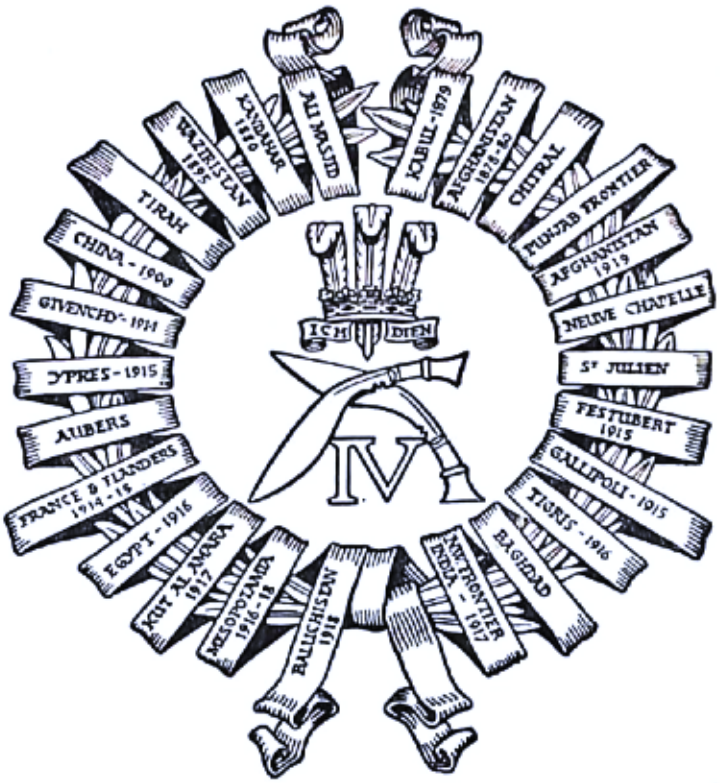


Plate 1.

A HISTORY OF THE
4TH PRINCE OF WALES'S OWN GURKHA RIFLES
1857-1937

VOLUME I.



Compiled by

RANALD MACDONELL, C.B.E.

AND

MARCUS MACAULAY

With Illustrations by

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL C. G. BORROWMAN

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1940

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यो व्यान पलटन का उनी सबै मानिस
हरु का कइले न नाश हुने याद को लागी
लिख्या छ जुन ले सर्कार का नौकरी
मां आफना जीवन त्यागी दिया।

To the deathless memory of all ranks of the Regiment who have given their lives in service this account is dedicated.

PREFACE

THE following History of the life and activities of the 4th Prince of Wales's Own Gurkha Rifles is unavoidably deficient in some of its earlier chapters; eighty years ago Regimental Records were not kept with that meticulous attention to detail which is evinced to-day.

For later information, especially those chapters dealing with the Great War, we are indebted to the following officers of the Regiment, without whose willing assistance and carefully written accounts we could have accomplished but little:—

Brigadier H. L. Scott, C.B., D.S.O., M.C.; Brigadier H. B. Kingsley, D.S.O.; Brigadier J. R. Hartwell, D.S.O.; Colonel M. J. King-Harman; Colonel Arthur Grant; Colonel B. U. Nicolay, C.B.; Colonel E. E. Couper; Lieutenant-Colonel R. B. Phayre, M.C.; Lieutenant-Colonel C. D. Roe, D.S.O., O.B.E.; Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. Mylne, M.C.; Lieutenant-Colonel C. G. Borrowman; Major W. R. W. Weallens; Major H. L. Barstow; Major A. M. L. Harrison, M.C.; Major A. R. Nye, M.C.; Captain C. T. Tirebuck; and Captain Rannu Thapa.

In compiling the accounts and reports written by these officers we have endeavoured to maintain uniform flow of language and style; our apologies are therefore offered in cases where wording or style has been altered to conform with the whole.

Special acknowledgment and thanks are due to Lieutenant-Colonel Mylne for his enterprise in initiating the History and for his energy in collecting funds; to the members of his History Committee for undertaking the spade-work of sorting and docketing the relevant papers, which has saved us months of labour; and to Lieutenant-Colonel Borrowman, who, since the retirement of Colonel Mylne, has so patiently carried on the work; also to Major Harrison for his work in revising the Appendices.

Colonel Borrowman's illustrations throughout the book speak for themselves, and have rendered the volume unique among Regimental Histories.

We feel that the Regiment will join us in a specific appreciation to Brigadier H. L. Scott, who has devoted so much time and labour to the writing of all those chapters dealing with the Regiment in France, and has further contributed to other chapters.

We gratefully acknowledge the kind assistance of Mrs Borrowman, who has drawn most of the maps.

Many interesting photographs have been sent to us, but unfortunately owing to the size of the volume these have had to be selected very sparingly; we would like to thank the officers for those that have been used.

Throughout our work we have met with unfailing courtesy and assistance from the Records and Publicity Departments of the India Office. Our thanks are due to the Chief of the General Staff, Army Headquarters, India, for permission to reproduce the map of Spin Baldak from the 'Official Account of the 3rd Afghan War, 1919,' and for help in obtaining permission to reproduce other maps; and to the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office for permission to reproduce maps from Official Accounts —Ypres, from 'Military Operations in France and

Belgium, 1915 '; Mesopotamia General Map; Area North of Baghdad; Caucasus and Caspian.

Our indebtedness to Major-General Sir James Stewart, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.B., is acknowledged in the text.

Our thanks are due to Messrs Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., publishers, and to Professor R. L. Turner, M.C., M.A., for permission to quote from Professor Turner's 'Dictionary of the Nepali Language.'

Brigadier L. P. Collins, C.B., D.S.O., very kindly undertook to read the manuscript before publication.

The thanks of the Regiment are due to those past officers and others who so generously subscribed towards the cost of production. Individual acknowledgment is impossible here, but special mention must be made of the gift of Rs. 500 by the Honorary Colonel of the Regiment, His Highness the Maharaja of Nepal.

A. RANALD MACDONELL.
MARCUS MACAULAY.

SWANAGE, DORSET.

FOREWORD

HAVING become a Gurkha by adoption rather than by military birth, so to speak, I deem it a great privilege to have been asked to write the Foreword to this History.

I have read it with the greatest interest and instruction. I feel that it is entirely worthy of the Regiment, and I can think of no higher praise.

It has taken some years to produce, and it has involved a vast amount of work for those mentioned in the Preface. But the result is a "live story," thanks to the skilful way in which the compilers have done their work.

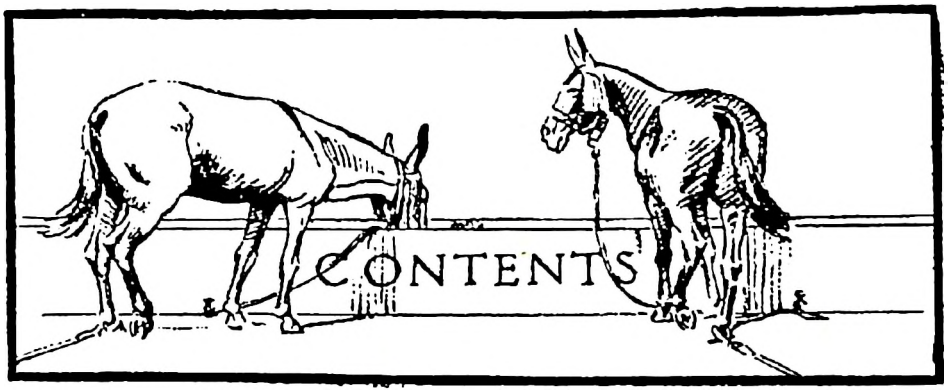
I am particularly pleased at the emphasis that has been laid on the Regimental Spirit with the two Battalions working in harmony. Our Regimental War Memorial is the outward and visible sign of this spirit.

This plain record of duty, faithfully and quietly performed in many lands from China to France, will be a source of pride to those who have served and are still serving in the Regiment, and an inspiration to those who follow after.

It affords still further testimony—if such is needed

—to the fighting qualities, the invariable cheerfulness, and to the good comradeship of the men with whom we have been privileged to serve.

The Gurkha motto, "*Kafir honu bhanda marnu ramro*" (It is better to die than to be a coward) is one that is hard to beat.



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CHAPTER I.

The Raising of the original Gurkha Battalions

DURING the beginning of the eighteenth century, Nepal consisted of a number of small principalities whose hereditary chiefs spent most of their time fighting for supremacy. In 1765, Rajah Prithwi Narain, ruler of the principality known as Gurkha, gained ascendancy over his neighbours and proclaimed himself King of Nepal at its present capital of Kathmandu. He died in 1774, having founded a kingdom, and from that time the people of Nepal have been known as Gurkhas.

Rajah Prithwi Narain's successors continued to extend the territory of their new kingdom, and by the end of the century had subjugated the Indian State of Garhwal and conquered the province of Kumaon. The Gurkhas now came into conflict with British interests. In 1801, however, a treaty was signed with Nepal, and a British representative was sent to Kathmandu. But raids and incursions continued, and in 1803 the British representative was withdrawn. In 1814, Gorakhpur, seventy miles south of the Nepal frontier, was raided and a British officer killed. In November of that year war was declared on Nepal by the Marquis of Hastings.

Four columns were organised, two of which were to operate from the south and two from Meerut and

The Raising of the original Gurkha Battalions

Ludhiana in the north-west. The force operating in the south met with disaster, owing to mismanagement and a total lack of appreciation of the fighting qualities of the Gurkha. The situation was eventually saved by General Ochterlony, who, with six thousand native troops, operating from Ludhiana, marched into the hills west of Simla and there defeated the Gurkha commander, Amar Sing Thapa.

In the early part of this campaign many of the smaller chiefs had come over with their men to the British, and as early as December 1814 the Secretary to the Government of India wrote a despatch authorising General Ochterlony to raise irregular forces from among these friendly inhabitants. Among these irregular forces were many Gurkhas holding allegiance to chiefs who, for one reason or another, had deserted Amar Sing. These Gurkhas were formed into separate units under their own chiefs and officers, and so became the original source of our first Gurkha regiments.

One of these Gurkha units actually took a prominent part in General Ochterlony's great victory on the 16th April 1815 at Deothal, which enabled him, on the 15th May, to bring about the capitulation of Amar Sing and his stronghold, the fortress of Malaun—which name the 1st King George's Own Gurkha Rifles (the Malaun Regiment) still bears.

It is worthy of note that after the victory General Ochterlony treated Amar Sing and his son, Ranjor Sing, with the greatest honour and consideration. Both were allowed, " in consideration of the bravery, skill and fidelity " with which they had defended their country, to march out with their colours, arms,

accoutrements, and a certain number of troops. This gesture was remembered by the Gurkhas and doubtless initiated that spirit of friendly co-operation between Great Britain and Nepal which has so facilitated the recruiting of Gurkha fighting elements for service in the Indian Army.

The Governor-General's Order of the 24th April 1815, and its confirmation to the Directors of the East India Company, seem to constitute the official date on which Gurkha corps were raised as distinct from other native irregulars, although Gurkhas, as separate units, had actually won distinction in action before that date. In these despatches it is stated that three " Nussuree Goorka Battalions " are to be raised ; the word Nussuree is apparently a corruption of the Hindustani, meaning friend or friendly. These battalions were to be formed under British and native officers, and to be known as the 1st Nussuree, the 2nd Nussuree, and the Sirmoor Battalions. The 1st Nussuree Battalion eventually became the present 1st King George's Own Gurkha Rifles ; the 2nd was disbanded in 1829 ; and the Sirmoor Battalion is now the 2nd King Edward's Own Gurkha Rifles. At the time when the Nussuree Battalions were being formed another provisional battalion was being formed by the Commissioner of Kumaon ; this is now the 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles.

The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Gurkha Rifles are often alluded to as the original Gurkha Regiments, but the 4th Prince of Wales's Own Gurkha Rifles, with whom we are directly concerned, can justly claim to be of original stock, although not raised until the Indian Mutiny some forty-two years later. It was

The Raising of the original Gurkha Battalions

then raised as an " Extra Regiment " attached to its parent, the 1st Nussuree Gurkha Battalion, then known as the 66th Native Infantry. The designation 66th Native Infantry had been given to the Nussuree Regiment when, in 1849, the old 66th had revolted and been struck off the rolls of the East India Company's register ; their colours had been handed over to " the loyal and brave men of the Nussuree Goorka Battalion," which in future was to be known as the 66th, or Gurkha Regiment.

In this manner the parent regiment of the " Extra Goorka Regiment " was already a red-coated regiment of the line in the service of the East India Company, while the Sirmoor and Kumaon Battalions continued to be shown in the Bengal Army List as local or irregular battalions. It may thus be said that the 4th Gurkhas were never in actual fact a local or provisional battalion, but were raised as a fighting unit to take their place in action by the side of their parent regiment, the 66th Native Infantry.

Actually the Regiment was the last Battalion to be raised by the East India Company before the reorganisation which ended the Company's rule in India.

The decision to raise the Regiment dates from the 1st July 1857, and by the 6th August, the official date of its inception, it was already at Almora being intensively trained for active service.

The Indian Mutiny

The revolt of the old 66th Native Infantry in 1849, mentioned above, was only one of the many signs of the trouble which had been brewing for some years. When the Mutiny broke out at Meerut

and Delhi on the 10th May 1857, the Gurkha forces remained staunch to the British Raj and proved themselves quite impervious to any form of subversive propaganda. The 66th was already armed with the new rifle, and asked, with typical Gurkha humour, that the greased cartridges supposed to defile their caste should be specially served out to them.

At that time the 66th Gurkha Regiment was at Almora. The trouble soon spread, and when the garrison at Almora revolted the 66th were among the few loyal troops left to garrison the town, then full of refugees, and indeed to defend the whole province of Kumaon.

It was learnt that large rebel forces were concentrating at Bareilly, some hundred miles to the south. There one Bahadur Khan had proclaimed himself King and had collected a force of over three thousand men and some artillery. His force was mostly composed of trained soldiers in revolt. He hoped to make contact with a force of nearly five thousand which had rallied round one Fasil Haq, in the district around Philibit to the north-east of Bareilly. In order, however, to reach his objective, Almora and Kumaon, he would have to advance through the hills of Naini Tal. The hill station of Naini Tal therefore became a key position for the British.

More loyal troops were necessary. It was therefore decided, on the 18th July, to raise another Gurkha Regiment. For this purpose Lieutenant D. Macintyre with 1 subadar, 8 jemadars, 7 havildars, 8 naiks, and 9 sepoys was detached from the 66th Gurkha

Regiment. The Battalion was successfully raised at Pithoragarh and Lahughat as an " Extra Regiment," now the 4th Prince of Wales's Own Gurkha Rifles.

The Extra Regiment was raised on the 6th August, with Lieutenant D. Macintyre in command, and Serjeant-Major Delahey to train the men. The first month was occupied in training, after which Lieutenants R. Clifford, B. Rogers, W. Jacob, and C. J. Garstin joined the new regiment at various dates. These appointments are not shown in the Army List until March 1858, when the establishment of the " Extra Goorkha Regiment " is there shown as 1 sergeant-major, 1 quartermaster-sergeant, 2 native doctors, 10 subadars, 10 jemadars, 60 havildars, and 1000 sepoys.

By September it was considered that the Regiment was ready to take over garrison duty at Almora and to send small detachments to guard the passes to the east of that place.

This enabled Lieutenant-Colonel M'Causland of the 66th Gurkha Regiment, who was now in command of the Kumaon Defence Force, to occupy Haldwani in the foothills to the south of Naini Tal ; but sickness broke out among the troops, who were withdrawn to the hill station of Naini Tal. Haldwani was immediately occupied by a rebel force of over a thousand men. On the day following this occupation, however, a company of the 66th, with two guns served by Gurkhas and forty cavalry, consisting mostly of refugee officers, were able to surprise the rebels and for the time being completely disperse them. This heroic little band was commanded by Lieutenant Tytler, who was later to command the

4th Gurkhas for seventeen years. The 1st Battalion lines in Bakloh bear the name " Tytler Lines " to this day.

With the cool weather the position in Kumaon became more secure. The " Extra Goorka Regiment," although still without proper uniforms and equipment and armed entirely with the old smooth-bore muzzle-loader, was now fully trained and able to send small detachments against the dacoits and raiders who constantly attacked villages friendly to the British. Further, Nepal had sent us a small force, which eventually amounted to nearly twelve thousand men, with cavalry and artillery under the command of the Prime Minister, Jung Bahadur himself, who was knighted for his services. The situation now enabled Colonel M'Causland not only to secure the defence of Naini Tal, but to take the offensive where advisable.

He consequently reoccupied Haldwani on the 1st February 1858 with a force of over a thousand Gurkhas, two squadrons of cavalry, and a battery of guns. The Gurkha force consisted of the 66th Gurkha Regiment with a detachment of the " Extra Regiment " under Sergeant-Major Delahey, the greater part of the Regiment having received orders to march to Lahughat and punish some refractory villages.

Colonel M'Causland's main object was to prevent the Bareilly rebels from gaining contact with Fasil Haq marching from the east. On learning that Fasil Haq was pressing forward with a force of five thousand, he decided to advance from Haldwani down the Bareilly road and engage Bahadur Khan's

force before the arrival of Fasil Haq. It meant a race only to be won by hours, but, with adequate supports at Naini Tal and the garrisoning of Almora assured, the adventure seemed worth the risk.

Colonel M'Causland accordingly left Haldwani after dark on the night of the 9th February. He took with him 500 rifles, consisting of the 66th Gurkhas and 70 of the "Extra Regiment" under Sergeant-Major Delahey, 150 of the Nepal Contingent, and 2 squadrons of Rohilkand Horse. With the small force at his command surprise constituted the whole element of success; a forced march of seventeen miles was made that night, and before daybreak the enemy was found encamped in a strong position some nine hundred yards off the road near Charpura.

The rebel piquets at first thought that Colonel M'Causland's force was an advanced guard of Fasil Haq's army, but seeing that it was officered by Europeans the alarm was given and the rebels immediately manned their guns. Colonel M'Causland's two six-pounders were at once brought into action at short range, to which the enemy replied with heavy fire and round shot from their cannon. Before the rest of the sleeping camp could be mustered our cavalry charged, followed by the Gurkhas at the double. In spite of their seventeen miles' march through the night nothing could hold these intrepid little men, who hacked down the enemy gunners with their kukris.

It was during this fight that Lieutenant Tytler won his V.C. He dashed on horseback ahead of his men and rode single-handed at an enemy gun, where

he engaged the gunners in a hand-to-hand fight until his men arrived. He received two bullet wounds and a spear thrust through the arm, but he prevented the gun being reloaded. Sergeant-Major Delahey, with the detachment of the " Extra Regiment," was also mentioned in despatches for conspicuous action.

The rebels then retreated, taking cover in the village. Here again hand-to-hand fighting took place, and within an hour and a half the place was cleared and Bahadur Khan's men were in full flight along the road to Bareilly.

Time did not allow of pursuit so the camp and village were fired, and Colonel M'Causland marched his men back to Haldwani, reaching camp that afternoon. In the course of fifteen hours the Gurkhas had marched over thirty miles and fought an engagement lasting two hours.

British casualties were one officer, Lieutenant Gepp of the 66th Gurkhas, and two men killed; Lieutenant Tytler and eight men wounded. The rebel casualties amounted to over one hundred dead and the loss of four guns. The " Extra Goorka Regiment " was awarded the Mutiny Medal for the part it took in this engagement.

By October 1858 the whole of Rohilkand was considered clear of rebels and the safety of Kumaon assured; the 66th Gurkhas were then marched four hundred miles south to join General Colin Troup in his march on Oudh. The " Extra Goorka Regiment " was now an entirely separate and self-supporting unit. Lieutenant D. Macintyre had rejoined his regiment, and Captain W. T. Baker was placed in command.

Events, 1858-63

In April 1858 the whole Regiment was marched to Pithoragarh for garrison duty, where it remained for five months. It did not return to Almora until July 1859. From July to October it was at Naini Tal, after which it marched to Philibit, four companies under Lieutenant Garstin being detached to guard the Ghat of the Saada River and prevent the rebels crossing to and from Oudh and Rohilkand.

In January 1860 the Regiment marched for Ferozepore, which it reached on the 25th March; Lieutenant C. Chester, who had joined with Captain Baker as his second in command, took four companies to Amritsar. These four companies were for some time in 1861 at Bakloh. There appears to be no record of the actual date of their arrival at Bakloh, which is a pity as it constitutes the first appearance of the Regiment at its future permanent home.

The Regiment remained between these two stations, Ferozepore and Amritsar, until December 1862, when it marched to Peshawar, arriving there on the 8th February 1863. Sickness broke out among the men, and in September the Regiment was sent to Kurkunee to recuperate. On the 25th October it left for field service to join the force under Brigadier-General Neville Chamberlain, C.B., in his campaign against the Wahabis in the Ambeyla Pass, which will form the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

Ambeyla Campaign, 1863-64

THE years following the Mutiny constituted a period of considerable unrest in the rough mountainous country along the north and north-west frontiers of the Punjab. The country was inhabited by Mohammedan tribes under tribal chiefs, whose ever-changing spheres of influence overlapped the then existing frontiers, where British rule was but loosely maintained. Many of these chiefs gave sanctuary to the refugees from the Mutiny, and the newly organised Punjab Frontier Force was kept busy suppressing raids and punishing the offenders.

Most of these events were purely local and easily dealt with, but one, the rising in 1863 of a Wahabi sect, seemed likely to assume more widespread proportions. This called for more serious action and resulted in an expedition, known as the Ambeyla Campaign, in which the Regiment took a prominent part.

The Wahabis, a puritanical Moslem sect, had their origin in Arabia where, in the middle of the eighteenth century, one Abdul Wahab raised the Bedouin to a state of fanatical puritanism against the corruptions and abuses which had crept into the orthodox Mohammedan religion and the observances of the teaching of the Prophet. Under the influence

Ambeyla Campaign, 1863-64

of one of his converts, Mohammed Ibn Saud, a minor chief, Abdul Wahab founded a Wahabi State north of Nejd. Turkey interfered, and by the end of the eighteenth century had outwardly suppressed the movement. Later, in 1824, Saud's grandson, Turki, headed a successful revival and re-established a Wahabi State, which his son Feisal ruled until his death in 1867. After Feisal's death, Wahabism ceased to be a ruling factor in Southern Arabia until the advent in 1897 of Ibn Saud, the grandson of Feisal and present King of Nejd and the Hedjaz.

During these vicissitudes of the Wahabi State many apostles of the sect fled to India, there to practice the cult in an unostentatious manner among the more ardent Moslems. They met with little sympathy until one Saiyid Ahmed Shah of Bareilly, converted to Wahabism during a recent visit to Mecca, journeyed to the Mohammedan country north of the Punjab. Here in 1824 he met with considerable success among the Pathans, by whom he was encouraged to take militant action. The Pathans, only too anxious for an excuse to attack their hereditary enemies, readily joined him in a Jehad against the Sikhs. But the Sikhs defeated his army, which was beaten back and retired into the Swat Valley. Here the Wahabis began to re-establish themselves, and after five years of varying fortunes Saiyid Ahmed extended his sphere of influence even to include the occupation of Peshawar. Many of his followers, however, became impatient with Wahabi ethics, its strict asceticism, and almost communistic ideals regarding the distribution of property; in 1829 they revolted, and

Saiyid Ahmed and those who remained loyal to him were compelled to cross the Indus into Hazara. Saiyid Ahmed then tried to enter Kashmir, but he was again pursued by the Sikhs and defeated in battle; Saiyid Ahmed himself was killed. His followers fled back to the Indus, where they claimed asylum. The Sikhs permitted them to settle along the foot of the Mahaban mountain on the right bank of the Indus between Torbela and Amb, where they occupied the village of Sitana and built the fort of Mandi near-by. When the Punjab was annexed by the British in 1849, the Wahabis were already an acknowledged and greatly increasing community.

The annexation and delimitation of the new frontiers after the Sikh War brought these Wahabi settlers into the closest proximity to the new administrative area. The new frontier then followed the Indus from Amb and Darbend southwards to Torbela (about forty miles above Attock), before turning westwards and skirting the foothills north of the Yusufzai Plain to Peshawar. Parallel and to the west of the stretch of the river between Darbend and Torbela, forming the boundary, lies the crest of the Mahaban Mountain, around the eastern slopes of which the Wahabis had settled. The mountain rises to about seven thousand feet. Its eastern slopes fall in bold, rocky, wooded spurs to the river bank, less than a thousand feet above sea-level; its western slopes fall in easy gradients into the Chamla Valley, which, since it was the scene of the operations about to be described, needs a few words of description itself.

The Chamla Valley is a cultivated plain of some

two to four miles in width (north to south) and some ten miles in length (east to west). On the west and north the valley is bounded by the Guru mountain range, separating it from the Buner Valley; on the east, as already indicated, it is bounded by the Mahaban Mountain range; on the south it is bounded by a spur of the Mahaban Mountain, connecting the Mahaban Mountain with the Guru range. There are about twenty villages in the valley. At the extreme western end of the valley, and on the north side, lies the village of Ambeyla. Northward from Ambeyla a pass, known as the Buner Pass, crosses the Guru range and leads down into the Buner Valley; in a south-westerly direction from Ambeyla another pass, known as the Ambeyla Pass, crosses the mountains into British territory, emerging into the edge of the Yusufzai Plain near the village of Surkhawai.

From their home on the Mahaban Mountain, in the vicinity of the Chamla Valley, the Wahabis proceeded to make themselves as troublesome as they could, and on several occasions it was found necessary to punish them for raids and depredations. In 1853 a small British force under Lieutenant-Colonel Mackeson, C.B., crossed the Indus from Hazara and routed the Wahabis, recrossing back into Hazara the following day. In 1857 another small force, under Major J. L. Vaughan, advanced northward from the Yusufzai Plain and destroyed the village of Narinji, whence the Wahabis were endeavouring to launch a religious war. Again, in 1859 a force of two brigades under Sir Samuel Cotton advanced from the vicinity of Nowshera and drove the Wahabis out of Sitana and Mandi.

After this the Wahabis retired to a stronger position on the crest of the Mahaban, where they built and fortified the village of Malka. Here, joined by numbers of refugees from the Mutiny, they began to increase their activities, making a lucrative practice out of kidnapping Hindu traders on the left bank of the Indus, carrying them across into Wahabi country on the right bank, and there holding them to ransom. In addition they began to work, not without some prospect of success, for a general rising of the neighbouring tribes.

In these circumstances it was decided that the Wahabis must be firmly dealt with once and for all. Accordingly, in October 1863, a strong force, known as the Yusufzai Field Force, was assembled at Nawakilla in Yusufzai under the command of Sir Neville Chamberlain, commanding the Punjab Frontier Force. The Yusufzai Field Force numbered, in the first instance, 111 British officers, 104 native officers, 1250 British and 4080 native other ranks; in all, a total of 5545 officers and men. Its components were as follows :—

Half-Battery 19th Brigade Royal Artillery.
Peshawar Mountain Train Battery.
Hazara Mountain Train Battery.
71st Highland Light Infantry.
101st Royal Bengal Fusiliers.
One Company Sappers and Miners.
Guides Infantry.
1st Punjab Infantry.
3rd Punjab Infantry.
5th Punjab Infantry.
6th Punjab Infantry.
20th Punjab Native Infantry.
32nd Punjab Native Infantry.
5th Gurkha Regiment.

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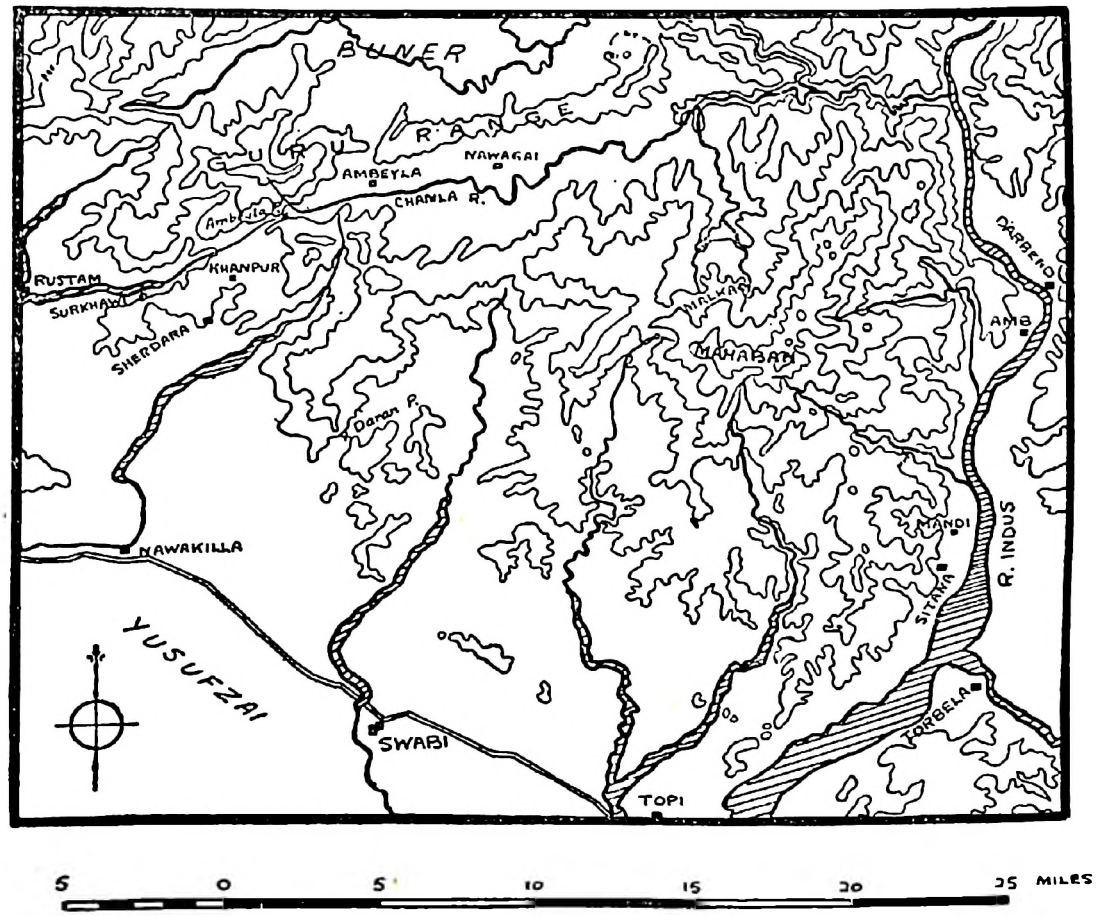
The plan of operations was that the striking part of the force, operating from the Yusufzai Plain, should advance north-east through the Ambeyla Pass into the Chamla Valley, traverse the length of the Chamla Valley eastwards to a point immediately north of the Mahaban range, and thence attack the Wahabis in and around Malka and drive them southwards towards the plains, where they could easily be captured. In the hope of avoiding hostilities with the Chamlawals and the neighbouring Pathan tribes, especially the Bunerwals, a proclamation was issued at the last moment emphasising that our quarrel was with the Wahabis alone. The value of this proclamation was largely destroyed, however, by a remarkable stroke of foresight and cunning on the part of the Wahabis, who previously announced to the tribes that such a proclamation was to be expected from the British, but that it would be merely a blind, since our real intention would be the conquest of the Chamla Valley, Buner, and Swat.

On the 18th October 1863 a detachment consisting of the two mountain batteries and two regiments of infantry opened the campaign by marching towards the Daran Pass into the Chamla Valley (the route by which Sir Samuel Cotton had advanced in 1859), with the object of deceiving the enemy as to our real intention to advance by the Ambeyla Pass. At the last moment this detachment changed its direction towards the Ambeyla Pass; on the following day it effected a junction with a further detachment of two hundred sabres of cavalry and three regiments of infantry, and the united detachments, constituting about half the complete force,

AMBEYLA TO THE INDUS



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then advanced to the Ambeyla Pass under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel A. T. Wilde, C.B. The two detachments commenced the ascent of the pass at sunrise on the 20th October. About half-way up the pass opposition was met with, but the tribesmen (from the village of Ambeyla) did not number more than 250, and the two detachments, with no casualties, gained the top of the pass by 2 P.M., when they encamped. Meanwhile, on the same day, the remainder, or main part, of the force left Nawakilla, joining the advanced detachments at the top of the pass late in the afternoon. Owing to the difficulties of the route through the pass the transport animals were much delayed, and it was not until two days later, the 22nd October, that the rear-guard arrived in camp.

On the 22nd October a small body of cavalry descended into the Chamla Valley and made a reconnaissance about seven miles to a village near the eastern end of the valley, the 20th Punjabis meanwhile occupying the slopes on either side of the descent from the pass. On the return of the cavalry it was found that large numbers of Bunerwals had descended from the Buner Pass and were holding the ground above the end of the Ambeyla Pass, with the intention of preventing the return of the reconnoitring party. On nearing the enemy, the cavalry charged, killing six and dispersing the rest. Later, when the 20th Punjabis were returning to camp they were fiercely attacked by the enemy, sword in hand, who followed them closely almost until the camp was reached about nightfall. That night the piquets round the camp were attacked and fierce

fights took place. All attacks were repulsed, but not without losses on both sides.

It was now evident that the Bunerwals were in active hostility to the force, a contingency for which no allowance had been made when planning to deal with the Wahabis through the Chamla Valley. Moreover, large numbers of the Wahabis and of the neighbouring tribes were seen to be coming up with banners flying and drums beating, and it was estimated that the number of the enemy must be from twelve to fifteen thousand men. All hope of advance without considerable reinforcements was now out of the question, and it was felt that the only thing to do was to hold the pass and await events. The camp was protected with sangars and abattis, and the piquets strengthened. Fortunately there was a good supply of water, and firewood was easily obtainable.

The situation was precarious, for the British force of 5500 seemed barely sufficient to hold the pass against the overwhelming and ever-increasing numbers of an enemy whose courage and determination were unwavering. A few days later the arrival in the enemy ranks of the Akhund of Swat, the spiritual leader of the frontier, greatly increased the religious fanaticism and zeal; with the Akhund came contingents from Swat, Dir, Bajaur, and even farther west.

The 4th Gurkhas, on the demand for reinforcements, left Kurkunee on the 25th October; escorting Number 3 Punjab Light Field Battery the Regiment joined the force in the pass on the 29th. Captain

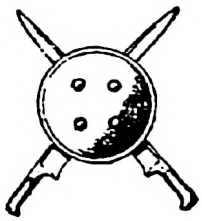
AMBEYLA PASS FROM SURKHAWI

C. W. R. Chester was in command, and with him were 7 British officers, 11 Gurkha officers, and 550 other ranks, of whom 40 were sick. Small as the contingent was, it formed a welcome and timely reinforcement.

On the following day, the 30th October, the enemy, in this case the Wahabis, made a most determined attack on the "Crag," a piquet position overlooking, and therefore commanding, all the piquets on the east and south of the camp. The piquet was lost for a time, but was recaptured after gallant efforts, with considerable loss to the enemy. Several other attacks were made at the same time by other bodies of the tribesmen, but all were repulsed. The British casualties on this day amounted to fifty-five.

During the first week of November enemy activity lessened. Taking advantage of the lull in the fighting, it was decided that, in order to provide the force with a line of communications less open to interference by the Bunerwals than was the Ambeyla Pass, a road should be constructed through the villages of Khanpur and Sherdara, parallel with the pass and some two or three miles to the south-east of it. At the same time, to provide a line of advance forwards into the Chamla Valley better than that which the defile of the pass itself could offer, a road was undertaken to the right of the pass and therefore more remote from interference from the Guru Mountain.

On the 6th November working parties were despatched towards the village of Ambeyla to work on the road into the Chamla Valley, covering parties on their front and flanks being under the command



of Major Harding of the 2nd Sikhs. At about 3 P.M. Colonel Wilde, who was in command of the piquets, gave orders to retire. Either these orders never reached the farther piquets under Major Harding, or else Major Harding had no time to retire his men before the enemy swooped down on them from the hills and attacked them in overwhelming numbers. Harding was loath to abandon his wounded, so, rallying his men, stood fast. Colonel Wilde immediately sent for reinforcements, and in less than an hour the 4th and 5th Gurkhas and the Peshawar Mountain Train Battery came over the ridge and reached the main piquet. Only an hour of daylight remained to cover Major Harding's retreat. Captain Chester, who was in command of the 4th Gurkhas, consequently proceeded across the lower slopes in the direction of the hard-pressed piquets.

To quote from 'A Record of the Expeditions against the North-West Frontier Tribes,' by Paget and Mason: "Colonel R. G. Taylor writes: 'It was on seeing the approach of the 4th Gurkhas that Major Harding finally resolved on retiring. I saw myself the detachments fall in very steadily for retirement and move off, a portion being engaged all the time with an enemy we could not see.'" Major Harding was the last man to leave the piquet. "'After the detachment had passed out of our sight, the enemy appear by a rush to have broken in between two of the detachments. Major Harding had been previously shot through the neck, and was being carried by a Gurkha sepoy, and it was at this time that he and Lieutenant T. B. Dougal, of the 79th Regiment, were killed. . . . During this time

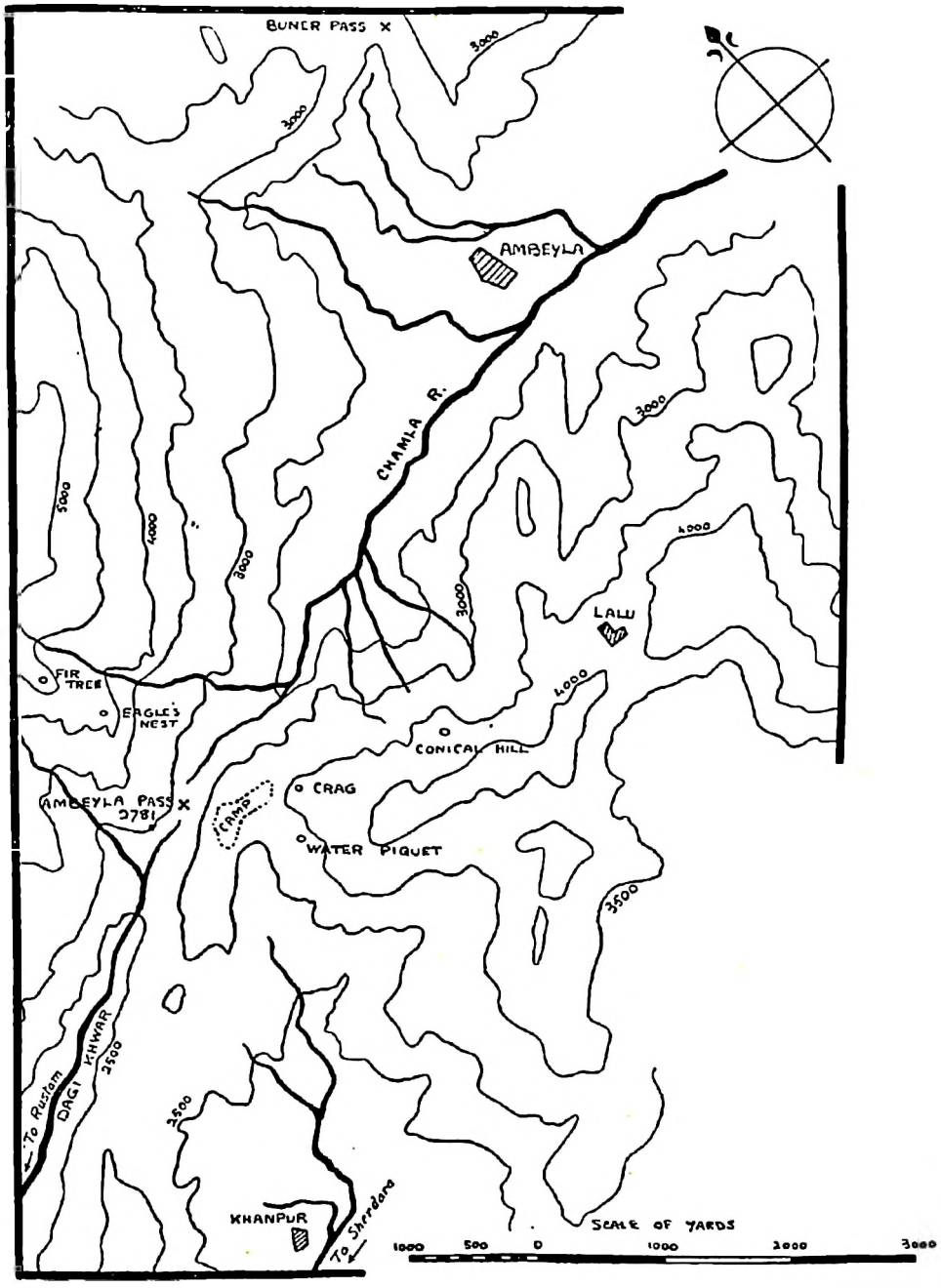
Captain Chester, with the 4th Gurkhas, had advanced as far as the nature of the ground and light permitted, and some of his men had reached the spur upon which Major Harding's detachment were fighting; a movement which enabled the remainder of the covering party, which was fighting its way up the ridge, to reach the crest, and the troops to get back to camp, though not till after dark.'" (Paget and Mason, pages 125 and 126.)

During this encounter three British officers were killed, Major Harding, Lieutenant Dougal, and Ensign Murray of the 71st Highland Light Infantry; Lieutenant Oliphant, of the 5th Gurkhas, and Lieutenant Battye, of the Guides, were wounded. The "Gurkha sepoy" who attempted to save Major Harding was Sepoy (later Naick) Kullum Sing Ghosain of the 4th Gurkhas; he was later awarded the Indian Order of Merit for his gallant act.

Enemy attacks continued from every quarter until the 18th November, when, for tactical reasons, the camp and troops on the slopes below the Guru Mountain, to the north-west, were withdrawn to the south-east of the pass. This movement, which had been carefully planned beforehand, was executed in a most successful manner.

On the 20th November the "Crag" was again fiercely attacked, and again changed hands. Since the main camp was now exposed to enemy fire it was essential that the "Crag" should be retaken at once. Sir Neville Chamberlain led the attack himself, and with the 71st Regiment carried the position by storm. This conspicuous, if somewhat unwise, act of gallantry on the part of the com-

AMBEYLA


BUNER PASS
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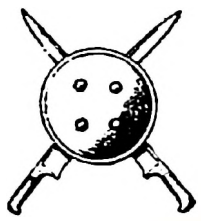
mander of the force resulted in the loss of his services, for Sir Neville was so severely wounded while entering the piquet that he had to hand over his command to Colonel Wilde.

Shortly after this engagement, on the 24th November 1863, Captain J. A. Tytler, V.C., who, as a young subaltern with the old 66th Goorkhas, had so distinguished himself at Charpura during the Mutiny, arrived to take over command of the 4th Gurkhas, although his appointment to the permanent command does not date until the 4th December 1865.

On the 30th November Major-General J. Garvock arrived in camp and took over command of the force. The force had now been reinforced by the 7th Royal Fusiliers, the 93rd Highlanders, the 3rd Sikhs, and the 23rd Pioneers, the strength thus being brought up to nearly nine thousand men.

In the meantime Major James, the Commissioner of Peshawar, had returned from furlough, and, on the 19th November, taken over political charge from Colonel R. Taylor, who had been acting for him. Major James had at once entered into negotiations with the Buner chiefs and others. By this time the Bunerwals had suffered heavy losses, and the chiefs were finding considerable difficulty in obtaining supplies for the minor tribes they had roused. They were prepared to withdraw provided their independence was guaranteed and no reprisals were to be taken. But Major James required more than this ; he demanded that the Bunerwals should accompany him and a force whose object should be to destroy Malka and expel the Wahabis from the countryside.



The chiefs left camp on the morning of the 11th December to consult with the Akhund of Swat. The Akhund, who was still receiving reinforcements from the western tribes, and was, above all, acquiring considerable spiritual credit and power, was not at all in the mood to accept any such terms. The Buner chiefs sent word on the 14th December, stating that the Akhund had decided on a general attack for the 16th. They advised the British to take the initiative, and promised that the Buner tribes should take no active part in the fighting.

Preparations for an offensive were therefore immediately taken in hand, and on the 14th December orders were issued for an attack by two columns under the command of Colonel W. W. Turner, C.B., of the 97th Regiment, and Lieutenant-Colonel Wilde, C.B., of the Guides.

At daybreak on the 15th December the first column assembled at the base of " Crag " piquet and moved off in the following order :—

4th Gurkhas } in
3rd Punjab Infantry } advance.
7th Royal Fusiliers.
A company of Sappers and Miners.
Hazara Mountain Train Battery.
23rd Pioneers.
32nd Pioneers.

The 4th Gurkhas had three companies skirmishing and three in support, while the 3rd Punjab Infantry had four companies skirmishing and four in support, covering the right flank.

As soon as the first column had passed out

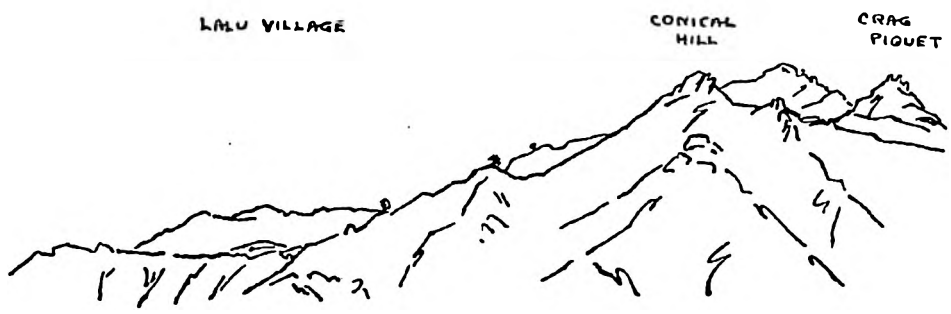
of the camp, the second column was formed up as follows :—

5th Gurkha Regiment.
101st Royal Bengal Fusiliers.
Peshawar Mountain Train Battery.
Sappers and Miners.
Corps of Guides.
3rd Sikh Infantry.
Artillery reserve ammunition.
Infantry reserve ammunition.

Lieutenant-Colonel J. Vaughan was left in camp with 2900 men.

The main objective of the British attack was the village of Lalu, about two miles east of the camp, where the enemy was in considerable strength. Between the " Crag " and Lalu stood the " Conical Hill." This hill constituted a key position ; its rocky, precipitous sides, weathered and scarped, were in places inaccessible ; its summit was strongly occupied by the enemy and fortified with sangars. Below " Conical Hill " and to its left was situated the hamlet of Banda, well protected by defences. Beyond " Conical Hill " stretched a narrow ridge terminating in a hill of lesser elevation ; this extended into a small plateau, backed by a high range in the lap of which lay the village of Lalu.

On passing " Crag " piquet both columns made ready to assault " Conical Hill." On the bugle sounding for the assault the first column advanced down the slopes and across the valley towards the Hill, the 4th Gurkhas leading. When the order was given to charge, the Gurkhas, changing their

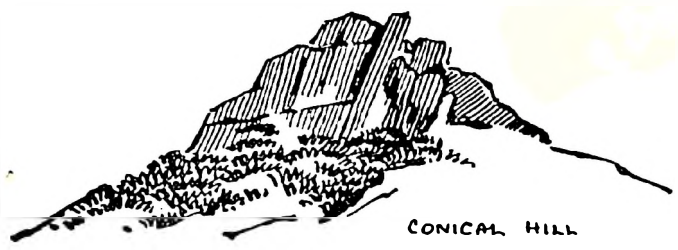


rifles over to the left hand, drew their kukris and stormed the hill, charging with both kukri and bayonet. They were closely followed by the 7th Royal Fusiliers, and such was the fury of this assault that within ten minutes the enemy was in full flight down the other side of the hill.

Meanwhile, the 101st Royal Bengal Fusiliers of the second column had made straight for the highest peak on the narrow ridge. This position was strongly defended. The peak was carried with a rush, and the base of the hills to the left, overlooking Chamla Valley, was secured by the reserves. The enemy, some two thousand strong, were now in disorderly retreat towards the village of Banda, and were being closely followed by all available men from both columns. Colonel Turner pressed the pursuit and captured the village, and the enemy retreated farther to Ambeyla. Elsewhere the second column was heavily engaged by other large bodies of the enemy, but, with the assistance of detachments from the first column, repulsed all attacks and drove the enemy down the valley.

In the meantime the camp piquets, and the camp itself, had also been heavily attacked, but these attacks also were repulsed.

The two columns bivouacked round "Conical Hill" and Lalu, where they were unmolested during the night. On the following day, the 16th December, an advance was made northwards into the Chamla Valley in the direction of Ambeyla. The second column, under Lieutenant-Colonel Wilde, advanced on the left from the vicinity of "Conical Hill";



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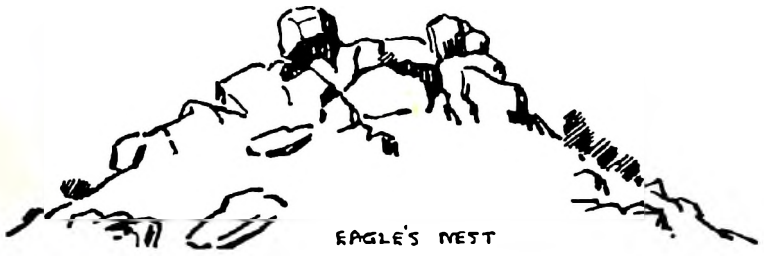
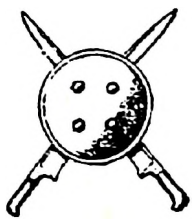
the first column, under Colonel Turner, advanced on the right from the vicinity of Lalu, moving in echelon of regiments from the left, with the 3rd Punjab Infantry and the 4th Gurkhas marching along parallel ridges to the left of the column, while the main body of the column proceeded along a gorge. During the advance the 3rd Punjab Infantry and 4th Gurkhas effected a junction with the right of the second column. As the two columns debouched into the valley, the enemy appeared in great force on a low ridge of hills which completely covered the approaches to Ambeyla. It was decided to turn their right flank. The position they occupied was a strong one and well suited for defence, but, seeing that the first column and the cavalry (who had moved forward from the camp in the morning) were in a position to turn their left as soon as the second column began to manœuvre, the enemy retreated towards the Buner Pass almost without firing a shot. Ambeyla was then occupied and burned, and Colonel Turner was directed to endeavour to cut off the enemy's retreat to the pass. During his advance a furious attack by two hundred of the enemy, including forty Wahabis, was made on the 23rd and 32nd Pioneers, who were advancing over broken ground. The suddenness of the attack staggered the Pioneers for a moment, but, turning on their assailants, they killed every one. They then moved forward into the pass, but, the day being far advanced, a halt was called and the force returned in echelon of regiments from the right. Many of the enemy still lined the heights, but no opposition was offered.





During the last two days' fighting the enemy had numbered fifteen thousand, but the Bunerwals had held to their promise and kept aloof. On the following day their chiefs came to the camp and offered their services. Large numbers of men from Bajaur and Dir and of the western tribes had already returned to their homes, thoroughly disgruntled at their heavy losses. The upshot of the meeting with the chiefs was that Colonel Taylor, accompanied by some other British officers and escorted by the Corps of Guides and a strong contingent of Bunerwals, proceeded to Malka to destroy it. This was effected, and by further arrangements with the Commissioner the Bunerwal chiefs undertook to prevent the Wahabis returning to or remaining in the district. One of the officers who accompanied this party (which had some exciting moments) was Major F. S. Roberts, V.C., R.A., Assistant Quartermaster-General.

On the return of Colonel Taylor's party and the Guides from Malka the entire force left for Nawakilla, where it was concentrated by the 25th December.

The total British losses during the above operations were 238 killed and 670 wounded, the details being as follows: 15 British officers and 4 native officers, 34 British other ranks and 185 native other ranks killed; 21 British officers and 27 native officers, 118 British other ranks and 504 native other ranks wounded.

The 4th Gurkhas lost 5 rank and file killed (all on the 6th November 1863), and Lieutenant J. K. M'Causland and 9 rank and file wounded.

Of the Regiment Captain J. A. Tytler, V.C. (who had been in command of the Regiment from the 24th November 1863), and Captain C. W. R. Chester

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(who had been in command of the Regiment until the 24th November, and who, since the 30th November, when the force was reorganised into two brigades, had been acting as Brigade Major to the 2nd Brigade) were both mentioned in despatches. Sergeant-Major Delahey, who had gained distinction in the Mutiny at Charpura, was still with the Regiment, and was mentioned for conspicuous gallantry on "Conical Hill" on the 15th December.

Later the Indian Order of Merit was granted to the following other ranks of the Regiment :—

Havildar Chamu Gurung, for great gallantry in the attack on Conical Hill on the 15th December 1863.

Sepoy Kullum Sing Ghosain, as mentioned above, for carrying Major Harding off the field on the 6th November 1863.

Sepoy Mowla Bundola, for conspicuous gallantry in saving the life of Private Walton of the 7th Fusiliers on the 15th December 1863.

Sepoy Pertab Sahai, for great gallantry in saving the life of Private Loper of the 101st Fusiliers on the 15th December 1863.

Sepoy Madhoram Basnyal, for conspicuous gallantry in shooting three of the enemy who attacked a soldier of the 101st Fusiliers on the 15th December 1863.

Sepoy Bhao Sing Khunka, for having killed two of the enemy on the 15th December 1863, and having behaved with great gallantry throughout.

Havildar Airoo Mahur, for having shot one of the enemy about to kill a private of the 101st Fusiliers.

For these operations the Regiment was awarded the Battle Honour "Umbeyla." The Indian Medal, with clasp "Umbeyla," was granted six years later.

Establishment of Cantonments at Bakloh, &c., 1864-68

At the close of the Ambeyla Campaign the Regiment remained in standing camp at Nawakilla until the 4th January 1864, when it proceeded to

Almora, where it arrived on the 19th March. Here it did garrison duty and detachments were sent to Naini Tal and Pithoragarh.

The year 1864 was an important one for the Regiment, for it was in June of that year that the Regiment received the Government promise of a permanent home. The grant, set out in Despatch No. 424 of the 29th July 1864 from the Secretary to the Government of India to the Quartermaster-General, is known as the Regiment's "Charter." The correspondence is given in full in the Appendix on "Bakloh" at the end of Volume II.

The establishment of a permanent home for the four original Gurkha regiments had been a matter of spasmodic agitation since the reorganisation of the Indian Army after the Mutiny. It will be remembered that the Gurkha regiments had been taken out of the line and formed into a separate corps. These regiments were entirely recruited from Nepalese who came to India, a foreign country, with their wives and families. Considerable hardship and expense was entailed for the men when the regiments went on active service or were moved about the country for administrative purposes. Some of the women went home to Nepal, others stayed behind or else endeavoured to find temporary accommodation somewhere nearer the Regiment.

The Government was not prepared to grant land for colonisation, as was at one time suggested, but, in order to improve the well-being and comfort of the men's families, it decided to allocate permanent homes for each regiment. The despatch mentioned above had granted to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Gurkhas

Establishment of Cantonments at Bakloh, &c., 1864-68

homes at Dharmsala, Dehra Dun, and Almora respectively, and contained a promise that a permanent station for the 4th should be decided upon later. Eventually, on the 17th December 1864, Despatch No. 651 allocated Bakloh as the permanent home for the Regiment. Under various reorganisation schemes at different dates attempts have been made to alter these decisions, but the Charter has invariably held good.

On the 4th December 1865, Captain J. A. Tytler, V.C., was appointed to the permanent command of the Regiment, succeeding Lieutenant-Colonel Baker. As has been recorded earlier in this chapter, Tytler, then already a distinguished soldier, took over the acting command of the Regiment from Captain Chester in November 1863, during the Ambeyla Campaign. From that date he was destined to command the Regiment through seventeen years of the finest service.

The Regiment remained at Almora until March 1866, when it marched to Jullundur under orders to proceed to its new station "near Dalhousie." For the next year Jullundur formed the headquarters of the Regiment. Two companies were sent under Lieutenant J. D. Stewart to Simla; during that year detachments were also sent back to Almora and Naini Tal, and in October the Regiment furnished a detachment for duty in the Fort at Ludhiana.

In the meantime, two hundred men of all ranks under Captain J. P. Turton, Wing Officer, had marched to Bakloh and were busy constructing the new lines for the corps. In March 1867 construction was sufficiently advanced for headquarters to proceed

to their new station, arriving at Bakloh on the 11th April 1867. Two companies were then detailed under Captain F. F. Rowcroft for duty at Simla; these detachments were furnished regularly until July 1868, Captain Rowcroft being relieved by Lieutenant James Hay, who, in turn, was relieved by Lieutenant E. P. Mainwaring.

Establishment of Cantonments at Bakloh, &c., 1864-68

During the remainder of 1867 until the Regiment again went on active service in August 1868 time was fully occupied in building the new barracks, four of which, besides quarters for native officers, having been completed by the beginning of that month.

Hazara Campaign, 1868

In 1868 disturbances broke out on the frontier of the Hazara district.

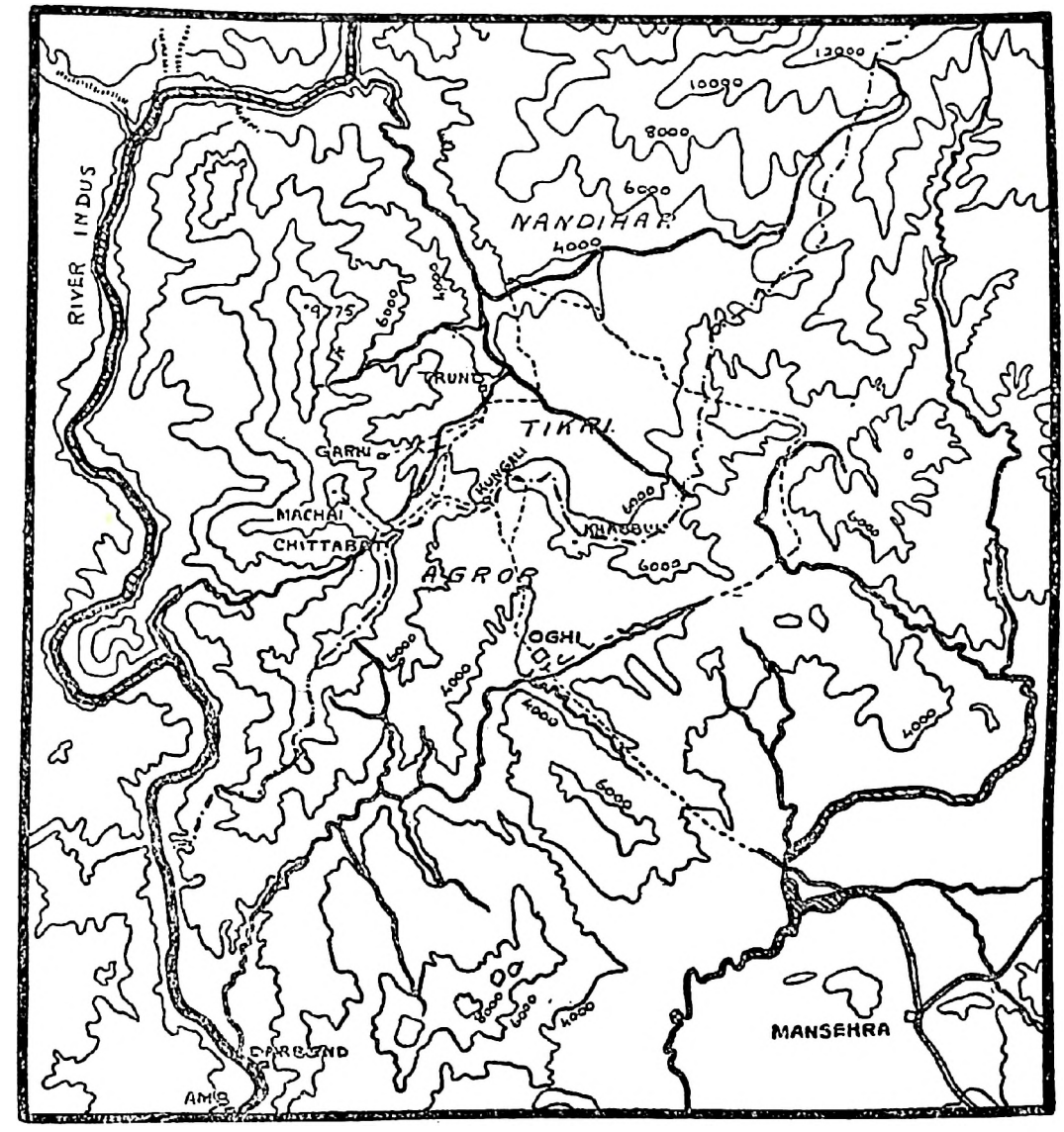
As has already been mentioned, the British frontier of those days ran along the Indus northwards from Torbela to Darband. From Darband it continued up the river for some six or seven miles and thence ran north-east along the watershed of the Kalakhaka or Black Mountain for about thirteen miles to the peak of Chittabat (8710 feet). From Chittabat the crest of the Black Mountain runs north-west for about two miles to the peak of Machai (9817 feet, the highest peak in the range) and thence almost due north, parallel to the Indus; the frontier, however, struck out in an easterly direction along the crest of a lateral spur, past the Khabbul Mountain, this lateral spur forming both the British frontier and the boundary between Agror on the south and Tikari and Deshi on the north. Of the tribes of this region those to the west of the crest of the

Hazara Campaign, 1868

Black Mountain, and between it and the Indus, were Yusufzai Pathans (the Hassanzais and Akazais), while those to the east of the crest of the Black Mountain and to the north of the Khabbul lateral spur already mentioned (inhabiting, that is, the territories of Tikari and Deshi) were mainly Swatis. Immediately to the north-east of the peak of Machai were two mountain glens known as Pariari, inhabited by a mixture of tribes, of whom the ruling class were Syads. The Swatis of Tikari and Deshi have no connection with the Yusufzai Pathans who now inhabit the Swat Valley (and by whom they were driven eastwards across the Indus centuries ago), but they have all the worst vices of the Pathan. The whole collection of Black Mountain tribes, Swatis, Yusufzai Pathans, and Pariari Syads, form a turbulent people, easily roused.

Religious fanaticism and inter-tribal warfare were the usual sources of trouble; with the British annexation of the Punjab, however, the arrival of Excise Officers, and, more particularly, Boundary Commissions, became the signal for further disorders. The reactions of the tribes were invariably the same; they buried the hatchets of religious and tribal strife and banded together in their thousands against their common enemy, "law and order." In 1852 a punitive expedition had to be sent against them for the murder of two Salt Excise Officers. In 1863 they sent considerable contingents to assist the Bunerwals against us at Ambeyla. This act of aggression had remained unpunished, which was probably a mistake, but was due to the unexpected turn of events at Ambeyla.

BLACK MOUNTAIN



5 0 5 10 15 20 MILES

ROUTE TAKEN BY THE FORCE ----------

BRITISH BOUNDARY -·-·-·-·-·-

Hazara Campaign, 1868

In 1867 and 1868 the Khan of the Agror, a tribe inhabiting the Agror Valley, to the east of the Black Mountain and to the south of the Khabbul lateral spur—and therefore within the British frontier, showed considerable resentment at the advent of a Survey Commission. A police post was consequently established at Oghi, the Khan's headquarters. On the 20th July 1868 this post was attacked and looted by a force of Hassanzais, Akazais, Pariari Syads, and others; four of the police were killed. It was suspected that the raid had been instigated by the Khan of Agror himself, in order to further his own ends. A small force, therefore, under Lieutenant-Colonel O. E. Rothney of the 5th Gurkhas, joined by Captain E. L. Ommaney, the Deputy Commissioner, at once marched from Abbottabad to Oghi and arrested the Khan.

By the 7th August all the neighbouring tribes were under arms. Fortunately reinforcements arrived speedily, and on the 12th August Colonel Rothney was able to drive the insurgents up the slopes of the Khabbul Mountain and over the frontier. In this engagement Colonel Rothney and another British officer, Major T. E. Hughes commanding the Peshawar Mountain Battery, were wounded, as also were six of our men. The numbers of the enemy had been estimated at three thousand.

It was now evident that within a few weeks the tribes could muster over ten thousand men. Should they meet with even temporary success it was certain that many of the trans-Indus tribes, together with our old friends the Wahabis, would cross the frontier and join the Black Mountain people. The con-

centration of a force sufficiently large to defeat any such combination was therefore essential, and the expedition thus became one of first-class dimensions. Since it was impossible to say how far the trouble might spread, any withdrawal of troops from Peshawar was out of the question. Troops had to be ordered from other and more distant stations, with instructions to arrive in the shortest possible time. (There was, of course, no railway west of Lahore.)

The march to Abbottabad, the point of concentration for the force, produced some remarkable feats of endurance. With the thermometer rising to 110° in the shade, the 6th Foot had 38 cases of heat apoplexy, 8 of whom died. The 20th Punjab Native Infantry marched 232 miles from Lahore in 10 days, while two companies of sappers and miners covered nearly 600 miles in 29 days. The 4th Gurkhas covered the 400 miles from Bakloh in 23 days, although they were detained four days at Hurripore.

By the 2nd October 1868 a force had been collected in the Agror Valley under Major-General Wilde, C.B., C.S.I., consisting of 166 officers, 1600 British and 6350 native other ranks, and 24 guns. A force of about 1500 was stationed at Darband to protect the friendly Nawab of Amb and to cut off the retreat of any trans-Indus tribes who might cross the river, while some 5000 men were used on communications with Abbottabad.

Major Tytler, V.C., commanded the 4th Gurkhas, and with him were 8 British officers and 640 other ranks. The British officers with the Regiment at this time were as follows :—

Hazara Campaign, 1868

Major J. A. Tytler, V.C., Commanding.
Capt. J. P. Turton, 2nd in Command.
Capt. F. F. Rowcroft.
Lieut. W. G. Keppel.
Lieut. C. J. Farquharson, Adjutant.
Lieut. J. Hay, Quartermaster
Lieut. E. P. Mainwaring.
Surgeon-Major J. B. S. Brown.

Lieutenant Mainwaring, above, joined at Abbottabad on the 24th September, having accomplished a marvellous feat in marching his two companies nearly 500 miles from Simla in 25 days, fording all the rivers of the Punjab *en route*, and finally reporting at headquarters with only three men sick.

General Wilde's plan of operations is interesting, as involving the occupation of the highest mountains in the country, as opposed to the normal advances by river valleys. (This plan was also adopted by General M'Queen in 1888.)

On the 3rd October 1868 the force marched out from Oghi. The original plan had been that the 1st Brigade, under Brigadier-General R. O. Bright, should move northwards up the Valley of Agror, ascend the lateral spur of the Black Mountain near a village called Kungali, and thence advance west along the spur to the peak of Chittabat; the 2nd Brigade, meanwhile, under Brigadier-General J. L. Vaughan, C.B., was to move westwards out of the valley, ascend to the true crest of the Black Mountain, and thence advance northwards along the crest to Chittabat. The 1st Brigade was so successful in its advance *via* Kungali on the 3rd October, however, that the 2nd Brigade was sent after it, and by the afternoon of the 4th October Chittabat was reached.

The 4th Gurkhas were in the Reserve at first, but on the 5th October they joined the 2nd Brigade, to replace the 2nd Gurkhas, sent to reinforce the 1st Brigade.

On the morning of the 5th the 1st Brigade advanced from Chittabat to attack the Machai Peak, which was held by the enemy. The country is thickly wooded, with precipitous ravines, and General Wilde said that he had never seen such a naturally strong position. Thanks to very accurate fire from the mountain batteries, however, it was captured with only eight casualties. That night it snowed.

Two days later, on the 7th October, General Wilde sent the 24th Punjabis to burn some villages of the Pariari Syads. On the 8th and 9th the Akazai, Pariari, and other tribes came in (the Hassanzais had withdrawn from the hostilities a considerable time before), so on the 10th the Government's terms were announced, and on the 11th and 12th the withdrawal of the force from the Machai Peak was effected.

On the 12th the rearguard, consisting of a party of the 2nd Gurkhas under Lieutenant A. Battye, was attacked by the Pariari Syads. On the 14th, therefore, Brigadier-General Vaughan took out a flying column from the 2nd Brigade to deal with the Syads further. This column, which was accompanied by levies, was made up as follows :—

Peshawar Mountain Battery.
Hazara Mountain Battery.
1/6th Regiment.
3rd Sikh Infantry.
4th Gurkha Regiment.

Hazara Campaign, 1868

The column advanced over very difficult country towards Garhi, one of the principal villages of the Pariari Syads. Garhi was burned by the levies, and the column returned to camp unmolested.

On the 17th the force began a march through Tikari and Nandihar, arriving back at Oghi on the 22nd. The men had not seen their baggage since the start of the operations.

The total casualties in the force were 5 other ranks killed, 1 British officer and 28 other ranks wounded.

Major Tytler was mentioned in despatches. The India Medal, with clasp "North-West Frontier," was granted two years later.

The Regiment left Oghi on the 31st October for Hassan Abdal, where it arrived on the 5th November. Leaving Hassan Abdal on the 6th December, it arrived back at Bakloh on the 7th January 1869, after an absence of nearly five months.

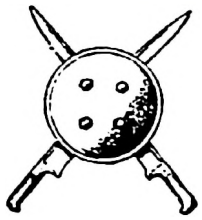
At the beginning of 1869 Major Tytler went home on furlough until November 1870; during this period Colonel J. L. Nation officiated as Commandant.

Lushai Expedition, 1871-72

In the autumn of 1871 a punitive expedition was organised to punish the tribes in the Lushai Hills to the north-west of Burma, the 4th Gurkhas being ordered to proceed to Chittagong to form part of the Expeditionary Force.

On the 16th October 1871, Headquarters of the Regiment, consisting of 580 of all ranks under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel J. A. Tytler, V.C., marched for Amritsar, where they arrived on the

OGHI FORT AND THE BLACK MOUNTAIN IN 1868



26th. The British officers with the Regiment at that time were as follows :—

Lieut.-Col. J. A. Tytler, V.C., Commanding.
Major J. P. Turton, 2nd in Command.
Capt. J. Hay, Adjutant.
Capt. E. P. Mainwaring.
Lieut. G. W. Rogers, Quartermaster.
2nd Lieut. C. A. Mercer.

Leaving Amritsar on the 31st October the Regiment proceeded by special train to Calcutta, where it arrived on the 7th November. Whilst at Calcutta the Regiment was inspected by Brigadier-General Ingall, C.B., Commissioner of the Presidency, and complimented on its appearance.

At Calcutta, Captain H. C. Garden joined the Regiment. The old Long Enfield rifles had been handed over at Amritsar, and the new Short Enfields with sword bayonets were served out in exchange before sailing from Calcutta.

On the 17th November 1871 the Regiment embarked on the *Prince Albert*, arriving ten days later at Chittagong and there joining the Right Column of the Lushai Expeditionary Force.

Lushai is the name used by the Burmese to denote generally the tribes which inhabit the hills immediately south of Cachar (otherwise Silchar, in Assam) and Manipur and stretching south-west towards Chittagong. These hills cover an area about the size of Wales ; their limits have been thus defined in the official account of the Expedition : " On the north they are bounded by Sylhet, Cachar, and the native state of Manipur ; on the east by the Chin

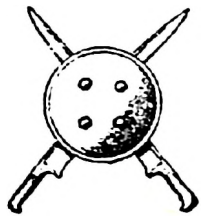
Lushai Expedition, 1871-72

Hills district; on the west by the native state of Tippera, and the Chittagong Hill tracts; and on the south by the Arakan district of Burma."

The Lushais, a sturdy and savage race much feared by their neighbours, had lately taken to raiding British tea plantations near Cachar and Sylhet, and had carried off into slavery numbers of British subjects. The tribes chiefly implicated had been the Sylhus and the Howlongs. Early in 1871 the Sylhus had made a raid on the plantation of a Mr Sellar. Mr Sellar himself had escaped, but a Mr Winchester, who was visiting him, had been killed while endeavouring to carry his little daughter to safety. The child, Mary Winchester, had been taken by the tribes up into the hills, and all efforts to recover her had failed. An expedition had therefore been organised for the triple purpose of recovering Mary Winchester, releasing the captured slaves, and enforcing submission on the Lushais.

The Expeditionary Force consisted of some four thousand men divided into two columns. The Left Column, under Brigadier-General C. Bourchier, C.B., was to operate from Cachar in the north; the Right Column, under Brigadier-General C. H. Brownlow, C.B., was to advance from Chittagong in the south.

The Left Column under Brigadier-General Bourchier, proceeding up the River Barak, met with many unforeseen difficulties. The river transport provided by the Bengal Government proved totally inadequate, and cholera broke out among the transport coolies, who were accommodated on flats suitable for less than half their numbers. The



column was, however, able to punish the Sylhu tribe and destroy several villages, notably that of Lalbura, an eastern Lushai chief who had taken a leading part in the raids.

One of the principal objects of the Chittagong Column was the punishment of the Sylhu chief, Savunga, who had taken part in the raid on Mr Sellar's plantation; this chief's village, Sylhu Savunga, was about ten miles to the east of Lalbura's village. Although the objectives of the Cachar and Chittagong columns were thus, geographically, very close together, it may be noted that the columns were operating quite independently of each other and that contact was never established between them.

On arrival at Chittagong the 4th Gurkhas went into camp near the river, the Karnafuli. The Chittagong Column, when complete, was made up as follows :—

No. 3 Company Sappers and Miners.
27th (Punjab) Native Infantry.
2nd Gurkhas.
4th Gurkhas.

The sappers and miners and the 2nd Gurkhas had arrived at the beginning of November, and a detachment of the latter had already been pushed up to Burkhul, about ninety miles up the Karnafuli from Chittagong.

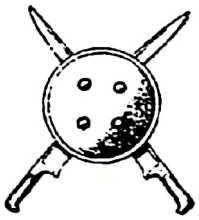
On the 28th November, the day following their arrival, the 4th Gurkhas moved up-river as far as Kassalong, where Headquarters remained until the 5th December.

The journey was by river steamer as far as Rangamattea, about sixty miles up-river from Chittagong,

and thence by native boats a further seventeen miles to Kassalong. Above Kassalong the river grew very shallow, and for the next twelve miles to Burkhul only boats drawing a few inches of water could be used. From Burkhul to Demagirie was a further thirty-eight miles by river ; boats could navigate about half this distance, up to Ootunchuttra, after which, owing to shallow rapids, only canoes could be employed.

From Kassalong detachments of the Regiment were sent through the jungle to Lower and Upper Burkhul, while one company, under Captain Hay, proceeded to Demagirie. Eventually the Regiment found itself split up into five detachments : one, the most advanced, at Demagirie ; a second at Ootunchuttra ; a third at Upper Burkhul (whither Headquarters were moved from Kassalong) ; a fourth at Lower Burkhul ; and a fifth at Kassalong under Major Turton. On the 5th January 1872 the Headquarters of the Regiment proceeded by boat and canoe still further up-river to Demagirie, where they remained, in touch with all river posts down to Kassalong, throughout the campaign. It may be conjectured that this last move was not without its excitements, for the river was tricky, and most of the men employed to paddle the canoes proved so unskilled that, after many mishaps, it was found necessary to lash the canoes together in pairs to prevent their overturning. Little resistance was met with from the enemy, the tribesmen usually firing a few shots and then disappearing into the thick scrub by paths known only to themselves.

Meanwhile a detachment of the force, consisting principally of the 2nd Gurkhas, had been pushed



on into the hills, and on the 11th January occupied Sylhu Savunga. Thereupon Rutton Pooea, a chief of the southern Howlongs from near Demagirie, who had been on friendly terms from the beginning, was sent off, together with a Subadar, to treat with the northern Howlongs, by whom Mary Winchester was then held prisoner. The northern Howlongs soon handed the girl over to Rutton Pooea, and she was brought back by the Subadar and placed in the charge of Colonel Tytler at Demagirie, whence she was taken down to the Commissioner at Chittagong.

In the words of General Brownlow's despatch: "Mary Winchester is described as a very pretty girl of six or seven years of age, with hazel eyes and good features. She talks nothing but Kookie (Lushai), and smokes a pipe, and orders about the Lushais with an air of authority, which shows that she has been well treated." In order to have something by which to remember her the tribe had cut off her long hair before handing her over. The child, who was now an orphan, her mother having died some years before, was eventually sent to her grandparents at Elgin in Scotland.

Upon the safe return of the Subadar and his young charge, General Brownlow advanced from Sylhu Savunga into the country of the northern Howlongs. On the 18th February the northern Howlong chiefs came into camp and handed over all their captives (including those taken in the raid on Mr Sellar's plantation), and on the 27th February the Sylhu chiefs followed suit. Apparently the Lushais were by no means unkind to their captives, for many of the latter wept on parting. On the following day

Lushai Expedition, 1871-72

the force began to return to Demagirie, *en route* for home.

Before leaving the country, there was a further small expedition, in which two companies of the Regiment took part. The southern Howlong chiefs had hesitated to come in, so on the 7th March General Brownlow marched from Demagirie with the object of bringing in the principal of these, Sypooea and Vandoola. He had with him the following troops :—

One gun Peshawar Mountain Battery.
Two companies 27th Regiment Punjab Infantry.
Two companies 4th Gurkhas.

(The two companies of the 4th Gurkhas were under Captains Hay and Hinde.)

" The Column marched forty miles over as bad a country as we had yet encountered, and on the third day, after a final ascent of more than four thousand feet, reached Sypooea's village, the chief himself coming out . . . and at once doing all that was required of him." (General Brownlow's despatch.) Vandoola, whose village was farther east, was ill, but sent his son to meet the force and make submission on his behalf. " On the 16th I recommenced the return march to Demagirie, which the troops reached on the 19th, the two companies 4th Goorkhas and the Artillery proceeding down the river the same day." (General Brownlow's despatch.)

On the 17th and 18th March 1872 the 4th Gurkhas, less the two companies under Captain Hay, embarked at Chittagong on s.s. *Himalaya* for Calcutta, where they arrived on the 20th and were inspected by Lord

Napier of Magdala. They reached Bakloh on the 9th April, Captain Hay and his two companies arriving on the 17th April, after an absence of exactly six months.

Lushai Expedition, 1871-72

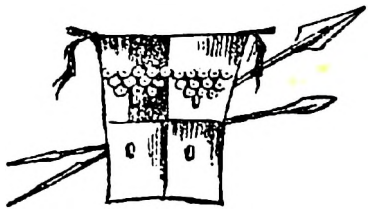
In 1873, 1875, and 1877 the Regiment furnished the Viceroy's guard at Simla.

1873-78

In October 1875 the Regiment was present at the Delhi Durbar, held for the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII. It was on this occasion that the Prince presented Subadar-Major Ballea Thapa, Sirdar Bahadur, and Subadar Chamu Raot, Bahadur, with special hunting-knives, which remained their most cherished possessions. Subadar-Major Ballea's hunting-knife is now in the Mess at Bakloh.

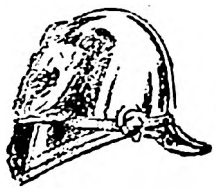
In the same year No. 1474, Sepoy Karbir Thapa, of "G" Company, won the Commander-in-Chief's gold medal for the year. He later became Subadar of "E" Company.

In 1878 the Regiment won the Northern India Rifle Association prize, and the Officers' Mess had made a centre-piece with three bronze figures on it, those of Subadar-Major Ballea Thapa, Havildar Kulpatti Gurung (later Subadar-Major of the 2nd Battalion), and Sepoy (later Subadar) Karbir Thapa.



CHAPTER III.

Second Afghan War, First Phase, 1878-79



TOWARDS the end of 1878 the Regiment was again called upon for active service, for in October of that year it proceeded to Peshawar to join the Peshawar Valley Field Force under Lieutenant-General Sir Sam Browne, V.C., K.C.S.I., C.B. The force was to consist of four brigades; Colonel Tytler was placed in command of the 2nd Brigade; Lieutenant-Colonel J. P. Turton, therefore, officiated in command of the Regiment during the first phase of the ensuing campaign. He was invalided home just before the commencement of the second phase, when the acting command was taken over by Major F. F. Rowcroft, who had joined the Regiment in 1866.

British relations with the Amir of Afghanistan had in recent years been of a very unsatisfactory nature, and in 1878 the Viceroy decided that a strong diplomatic mission under Sir Neville Chamberlain should be sent to Kabul in order to further our interests there. The Amir did not encourage the idea, saying that he could not be responsible for the lives of Europeans in this rather turbulent country. Nevertheless, he received at his court a mission from Russia, and this at a time when war between England and Russia seemed extremely likely.

The Viceroy considered that the proposed mission could not be abandoned without loss of prestige, and pressed forward his plans.

On the 21st September 1878, Sir Neville Chamberlain arrived at Jamrud, near the mouth of the Khyber Pass. On the same day a party, consisting of Major P. L. N. Cavagnari, a Political Officer, Colonel Jenkins, in command of the cavalry escort, and some native representatives, was sent forward to the Fort of Ali Masjid, about half-way up the Khyber Pass, to see whether Faiz Muhammed Khan, the commander of the Afghan garrison there, was likely to oppose the advance of the mission. Faiz Muhammed Khan made his hostile intentions perfectly clear in the interview that followed, and at one time, surrounded by an angry crowd of the Khan's followers, Cavagnari and his party were in rather an uncomfortable position.

It was obvious that the attitude of the Khan was dictated by that of his royal master in Kabul. The Cavagnari party returned to Jamrud. The Chamberlain Mission withdrew to Peshawar. The Viceroy sent an ultimatum to the Amir at Kabul, and mobilisation orders were issued. The stage was set for an invasion of Afghanistan.

During October and November three armies of invasion were mobilised. The first was to advance from Quetta to Kandahar in southern Afghanistan, the second to occupy the Kurram Valley, and the third to advance through the Khyber Pass towards Jellalabad. This third army, known as the Peshawar Valley Field Force, under the command of Sir Sam Browne, consisted of four brigades, commanded, respectively, by Brigadier-General H. T. Macpherson,

V.C., C.B., Brigadier-General J. A. Tytler, V.C., C.B., Brigadier-General F. E. Appleyard, C.B., and Brigadier-General W. B. Browne.

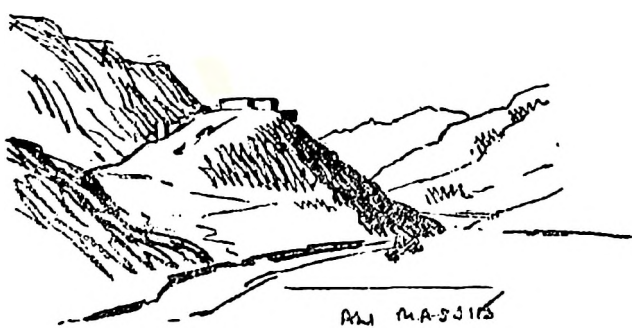
Macpherson's Brigade was made up as follows :—

No. 4 Mountain Train Battery.
4th Battalion the Rifle Brigade.
20th (Punjab) Bengal Infantry.
4th Gurkhas.

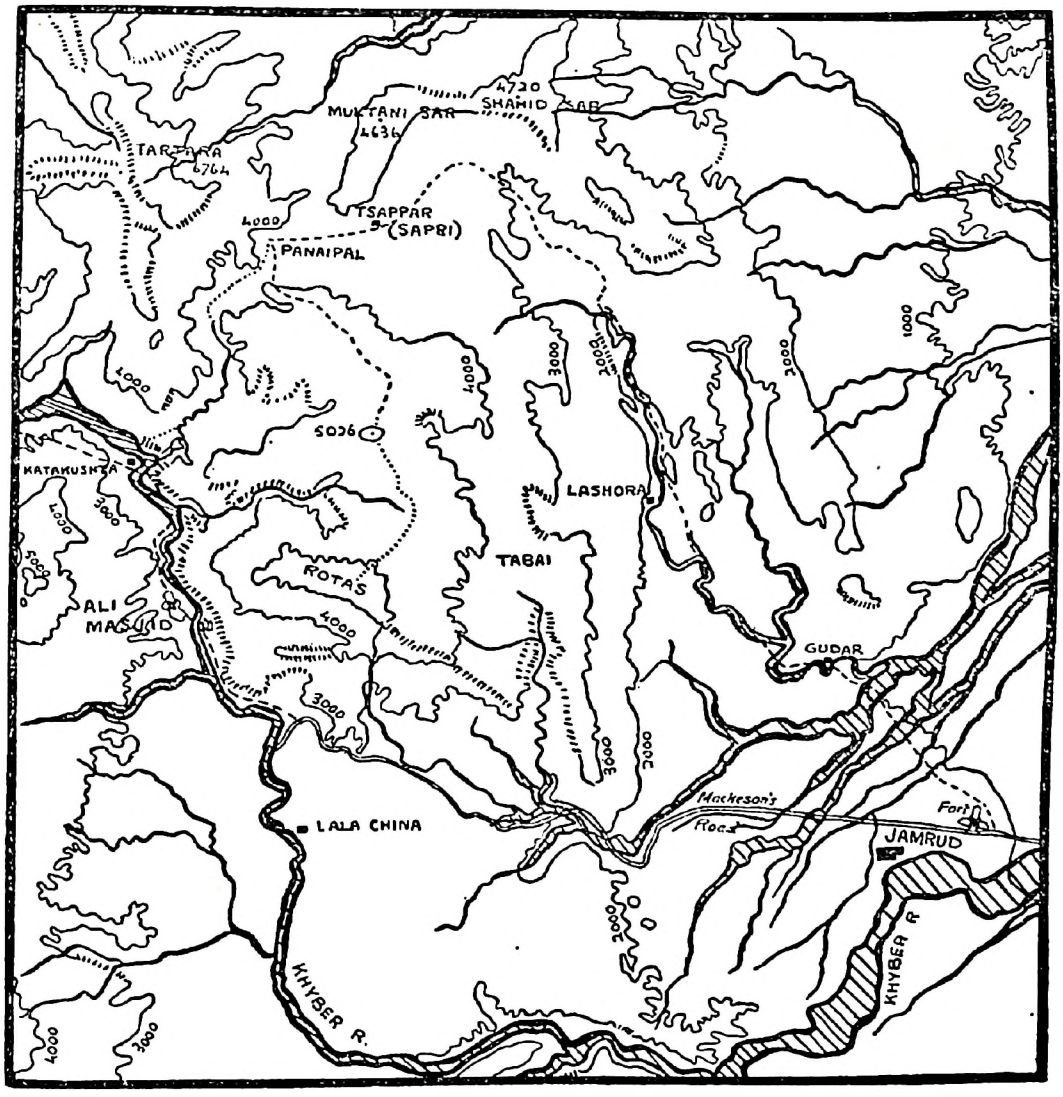
The first task of Sir Sam Browne's force was to capture the Fort of Ali Masjid. In order to understand these operations a slight description is necessary of the terrain on which they were carried out.

The route from Jamrud to Ali Masjid, about nine miles in all, ran through open country for about three miles west from Jamrud before entering the Khyber Pass. It then narrowed to some three feet in width and climbed through the foothills to a small plateau within sight of the Fort. Crossing the plateau the road fell steeply to the stream which drains the Khyber Valley, and thence ran along the banks of the stream past a mosque and through some flat cultivated fields. It then entered a gorge about a mile long and so narrow that two laden camels could barely pass one another, and finally emerged into a rocky valley, some miles in width, at the farther end of which to-day stands the Cantonment of Landi Kotal. On the left of the road, between the mosque and the entrance to the narrow gorge, rose a steep conical hill on which stood the Fort of Ali Masjid. Opposite the Fort, on the other side of the Pass, was the Rotas Mountain, some five thousand feet in height.

During the rainy season the gorge was impassable, and an alternative route to that just described had



ALI MASJID


MULTANI SAR
4636
SHAHID SAR
4730
TARTARA
4764
TSAPPAR
(SAPRI)
PANAIPAL
SOJO6
KATAKUSHTA
LASHORA
TABAI
ROTAS
ALI
MASJID
GUDAR
LALA CHINA
Hackeson's
Road
Fort
JAMRUD
KHYBER R.
KHYBER R
4000
3000
2000
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1 0 1 2 3 4 5 MILES

to be used. This ran north from Jamrud, skirting the eastern base of the Rotas Mountain, about six miles to the village of Lashora. From Lashora it climbed by a narrow path to a Chappa or flat on a crest below the mountain, ran along the Chappa and, by another rough footpath, dropped to the main route at a place called Kata Kushta near the upper end of the narrow gorge.

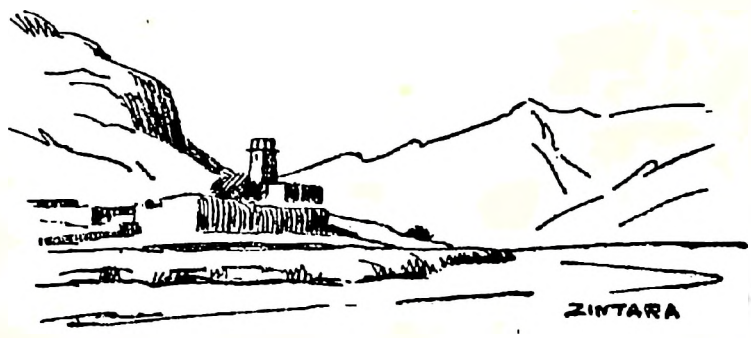
The plan of attack on the Fort and Pass was as follows :—Tytler's Brigade was to go to Lashora, climb up to the Chappa, wait there till the fighting started, and then descend to the foothills commanding the Pass near Kata Kushta in order to block any retreat of the Afghans up the Pass. Macpherson's Brigade was to march to Lashora and thence ascend the Rotas Mountain. This mountain covered the left of the Afghan position, and a large number of the hostile Mohmand tribe had been observed encamped on its slopes. The attack on the Fort was to be carried out by the brigades under Brigadier-Generals Browne and Appleyard, to the latter being entrusted the additional task of working his men round the Fort to cut off the retreat of the Afghans by the road which led from the rear of the Fort to the Bazar Valley some nine miles west.

At 9 P.M. on the 20th November 1878 the 4th Gurkhas, under Colonel Turton, were ready to leave Jamrud for Lashora in order to be able to start up Rotas at early dawn on the 21st. Part of the Brigade, however, arrived late at Jamrud ; they were hot and tired and were unable to start for Lashora till early next morning. Consequently the Regiment found

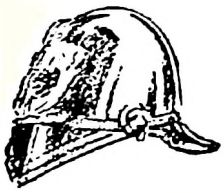
itself commencing the ascent of Rotas at 9 A.M. instead of at early dawn. The 20th Punjab Infantry led the way. The climb was steep, and, since the Mohmands had disappeared and might very well be lying in ambush, a sharp watch had to be kept and progress was slow. At 4 P.M. the leading files reached the crest of the mountain. It must have been a thrilling moment for them. The Brigades under Brigadier-Generals Browne and Appleyard, covered by artillery fire from the small plateau and the bed of the Khyber stream, had advanced to the attack earlier in the day, and by this time the 14th Sikhs and the 27th Punjab Infantry had established themselves within a hundred and fifty yards of the enemy on a crest of the hill in front of the Fort and were exchanging a hot fire with the Afghans. Brigadier-General Tytler's Brigade, meanwhile, was guarding the Pass from the Chappa and from the foothills commanding the Pass at Kata Kushta.

The Afghans, fiercely attacked, were discouraged by the appearance of fresh troops on Rotas, and when night fell they took advantage of Brigadier-General Appleyard's failure to occupy the road from the Fort to the Bazar Valley and marched quietly away. Next morning, at early dawn, the Afghan Infantry, who had been holding the advanced piquets, discovered that they had been deserted; they were found marching up the Pass and promptly surrendered, "seemingly much relieved in mind."

The Fort had now been entirely deserted by the enemy, and the action of Ali Masjid came to an end. The Regiment had done no fighting, but



Second Afghan War, First Phase, 1878-79



the mere fact of its appearance on Rotas had undoubtedly contributed to the flight of the enemy.

With the capture of the only fortified enemy position in the Khyber Pass it was decided to garrison the whole district, and the Regiment, as part of Macpherson's Brigade, marched off to Jellalabad. It remained there for nearly two months.

During this period the men improved their acquaintance with the 4th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade. On Christmas Day 1878 a deputation of Gurkhas appeared in the lines of the 4th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade, bringing as a Christmas present several casks of rum which they had collected from their daily ration. This friendly action was doubtless much appreciated by their brother Riflemen, and the compliment was returned a month later, when, on a Gurkha festival, the men of the Rifle Brigade presented each company of the 4th Gurkhas with five sheep, purchased out of the men's savings for the purpose. The friendship started then has now become almost a tradition.

Trouble was not at an end in the Khyber; constant attacks were made on British piquets by the Afridis, who, when pursued, made off into the Bazar Valley. Accordingly a force was organised to occupy the Valley, and on 13th December three columns set out. The Regiment took no part in this, the first Bazar Expedition, but the column operating from Dakka was commanded by Brigadier-General Tytler, who took with him as orderly officer Captain G. W. Rogers, who had joined the Regiment as a Lieutenant in December 1868. It is also interesting to note that the 2nd Gurkhas took part in this expedition

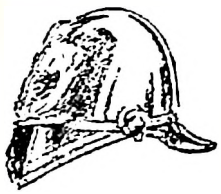
under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Donald Macintyre, V.C., who, as a Lieutenant, had raised the 4th Gurkhas twenty-two years before.[1]

On the 24th January 1879 the Regiment supplied fifty men and three officers towards a small force that was sent out to the north of Bassawal to punish the villages of Kikati and Raja Miani for complicity in the murder of a *bhisti* of the 17th Foot. Five of the villagers were killed and seventy-five taken prisoner, while seven hundred head of sheep and cattle were captured. Most of the prisoners were soon released.

The first expedition into the Bazar Valley had not done any lasting good, so on the 25th January 1879 a second expedition was sent out. This force consisted of three columns. Two hundred and one of all ranks of the 4th Gurkhas took part, forming part of the column operating from Bassawal under Brigadier-General Tytler. The march over difficult country was safely accomplished, and no opposition was met with beyond sniping at piquets. Before any effective action could be taken, however, the Bassawal column was hurriedly recalled by a telegram from Sir Sam Browne, who was expecting an attack on Jellalabad by hostile Mohmands. Just as the column was starting the return march on the 3rd February a man of the 4th Gurkhas was hit by a sniper in a clump of trees and died in a few minutes, the only casualty in the Regiment. The casualties in all three columns were five killed and thirteen wounded.

[1] Two sons of Captain (late Colonel) G. W. Rogers served in the 4th Gurkhas: Major G. G. Rogers, M.C., of the 1st King George's Own Gurkha Rifles, and Captain N. H. Rogers, who died at sea in 1917, of wounds received in Mesopotamia, within three days of his father's death. A tablet to both Colonel G. W. Rogers and Captain N. H. Rogers is in the church at Bakloh.

Second Afghan War, First Phase, 1878-79



On returning from the second Bazar Valley expedition the Regiment went back to Jellalabad and again became part of Macpherson's Brigade. Two days later, on the 6th February, the Mohmands descended on the districts of Goshta and Kama, some miles east of Jellalabad and the other side of the Kabul River. Three hundred men of the 4th Gurkhas formed part of the force which, under General Macpherson, set out for Kama early the next morning to deal with the raiders. The column crossed the Kabul River by the trestle bridge east of Jellalabad and marched swiftly northward up the right bank of the Kunar River, a tributary of the Kabul River running into it at right angles about four miles east of Jellalabad.

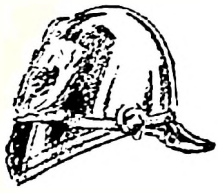
At dawn the column crossed to the left bank of the Kunar River. It must have been a very unpleasant crossing, for the river, swollen by the icy waters from the glaciers of the Hindu Kush, was wide and swift. Several men and animals were swept away, but no lives were lost. The Mohmands, having got wind of what was happening, had beaten a retreat during the previous night, and while the cavalry went in vain pursuit the infantry had little to do. The force bivouacked in a fierce north wind near the village of Jalaludin, and the next morning forded the river again on their homeward march. Many of the men suffered badly from the intense cold of the waters.

On the 21st March the Regiment supplied a hundred and two men to a force under Brigadier-General Tytler, which was sent out to avenge an attack made by Shinwaris on a survey party in the Maidanak

district, fourteen miles south-west of Bassawal. The force reached Maidanak at dawn, and, since no opposition was met with, General Tytler had to content himself with levying fines on several villages and blowing up some of the village towers; he then remained to see that the survey was safely completed.

Some days later tribal unrest gave promise of a more serious menace. Azmatulla Khan, chief of the Ghilzais, had come down into the Laghman Valley to stir up the tribes against the British, and at the same time the Khugianis, a powerful tribe, were assembling near Futtehabad, west of Jellalabad. The Ghilzais, a tribe inhabiting the country between the Safed Koh range on the south and the Kabul River on the north, were men to be taken seriously. Thirty-seven years before, in January 1842, they had been largely responsible for the total annihilation of the British force of over sixteen thousand British and Native soldiers and camp followers, when precisely one British survivor of the army of Kabul had arrived at Jellalabad.

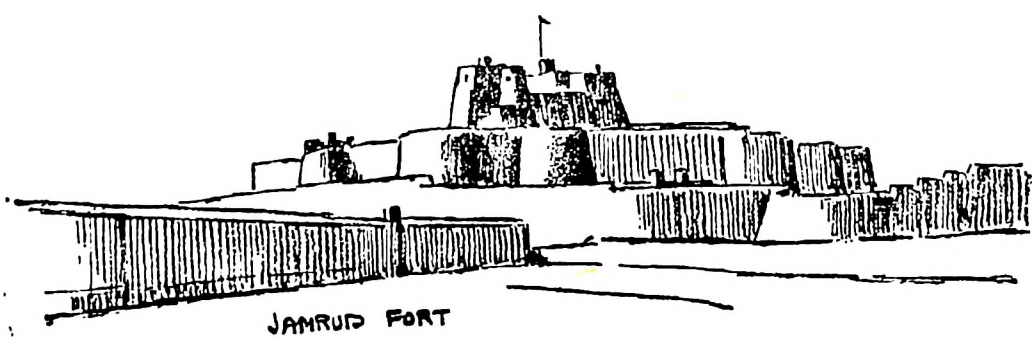
Three columns were sent out to deal with the situation. One was to disperse the Khugianis at Futtehabad. The second, a cavalry column under Major Wood, 10th Hussars, was to attack Azmatulla in the Laghman Valley. The third, Macpherson's, in which were included three hundred men of the 4th Gurkhas, was to march along the south bank of the Kabul River and cut off the enemy's retreat in that direction. The attack on Azmatulla depended for its success on swiftness and secrecy. Unfortunately a terrible disaster overtook Wood's cavalry at the



outset. At 9.30 P.M. on the 31st March they started out to ford the Kabul River. The moon was waning, and while the first squadron crossed safely the second squadron, riding in half sections, missed the ford in the semi-darkness and was swept struggling down the river. Nearly fifty men were drowned.

Meanwhile, Macpherson's column left camp at 9 P.M. and marched westwards up the Kabul River for nine miles, making its way slowly over difficult country heavy with mud and intersected with water-courses; it eventually forded the Surkhab River. The column then struggled up the steep ascent of the Siah Koh Pass, parts of it blocked with boulders, parts diabolically slippery, and arrived wearily at the top at 10 A.M. on the 1st April. Major Wood's cavalry, or what remained of it, could be seen moving in the distance, but that was all. Azmatulla, warned of what was afoot, had fled in the night. About 1.15 P.M. the column reached the flat country near the river, occupied the fort there, and prepared to spend the night. The men were tired, and there was no sign of the rear-guard or the mule transport, both having lost their way in the dark. At midnight, however, orders were received to return at once, and the column set off by an easier route over the Duranda Pass. It picked up the rear-guard on the way and eventually arrived back on the evening of the 2nd April.

Soon after this operation, the last of the campaign in which the 4th Gurkhas took part, Sir Sam Browne moved his troops thirty-five miles west from Jellalabad to camps in the pleasant valley of Gandamak



and on the near-by ridge of Safed Sang. They were not destined to remain there more than six weeks, however, for the campaign was nearly at an end. The old Amir of Afghanistan was dead and his son and successor, Yakub Khan, had opened peace negotiations with the Viceroy. On the 8th May Yakub Khan arrived at Gandamak to treat with Sir Sam Browne, and on the 26th May the Treaty of Gandamak was signed. Peace—of a somewhat doubtful nature—was once more established.

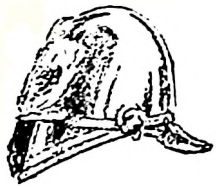
For its services in this campaign the Regiment received the Afghan Medal with clasp for Ali Masjid.

Sir Sam Browne recorded his opinion of the Regiment in the following terms :—

" The 4th Goorkhas, though it was never engaged with the enemy, is one of the best Native Regiments I have ever seen. Smart and soldier-like, held in the bonds of a good discipline and animated by great zeal, this Regiment has, on all occasions when its services were required, won for itself the admiration of all.

" Lieutenant-Colonel Turton commanded it during the campaign, and the efficient state of the Corps is very creditable to him."

" In 1879 the Regiment is shown as returning from Field Service in Afghanistan " is all we find in the official Digest of Services. It was a ghastly journey. Cholera had raised its head in the Khyber, and by the end of May, when the withdrawal of the troops to India was ordered, there were nearly four hundred sick in the British and Native hospitals at Safed



Sang. The food was poor, the water scarce—and usually bad. The temperature on the march varied from 110° to 115° Fahrenheit in the shade—and there wasn't much shade.

The men must have suffered terribly. To quote from the report of Surgeon-General Ker-Innes :— "On reaching Jamrud . . . their countenances betokened great nervous exhaustion, combined with a wild expression, difficult to describe; the eyes injected, and even sunken; a burning skin, black with the effects of sun and dirt; dry tongue; a weak voice; and a thirst which no amount of fluids seemed to relieve."

Captain Money of the XIth Bengal Lancers (the father of Lieutenant-Colonel E. F. D. Money, D.S.O., of the 4th Gurkhas), who took part in this march, expressed himself as follows in a letter to his parents dated the 24th July 1879: ". . . The 4th Goorkhas too, poor little men, suffered very much. You have no idea what fine little fellows the Goorkhas are. They actually do not know what fear is. They have throughout the campaign behaved gloriously. Everyone admits that they have as a body (I think all five Regiments were employed) marched and fought better than anybody—no matter who."

Peshawar was reached about the middle of June, and the Peshawar Valley Field Force was broken up on the 19th June. When next heard of, at the end of September, the Regiment is at Bakloh, so it seems reasonable to assume that it moved there as soon as possible after the return from Afghanistan.

Again Major Cavagnari appears upon the scene. Again he heralds in a new campaign—this time tragically, by his death. On the 23rd July, in accordance with Article 4 of the Treaty of Gandamak, Cavagnari arrived in Kabul as British Resident there. Six weeks later he and his party were murdered by a frenzied mob after a heroic eight hours' defence of the Residency.

A second invasion of Afghanistan was inevitable, and an army, later known as the Northern Afghanistan Field Force, was hurriedly mobilised. The 1st Division set out for Kabul almost immediately under the command of Major-General Sir Frederick Roberts, V.C., K.C.B. (afterwards Lord Roberts). Roberts' force was to march to Kabul *via* the Shutargardan Pass, while the 2nd Division, known as the Khyber Field Force, under Major-General R. O. Bright, C.B., was to establish an alternative line of communication along the Khyber route. Bright's force was made up of three infantry brigades, the 4th Gurkhas, commanded by Major F. F. Rowcroft, forming part of the 1st Brigade under Brigadier-General Charles Gough, V.C., C.B.

The Regiment marched from Bakloh on the 25th September, crossing the frontier into Afghanistan on the 2nd November, and joined Gough's Brigade at Gandamak on the 15th November. Gough pronounced it to be "a splendid regiment in every way."

The next four weeks were spent quietly establishing strong posts around Gandamak. These were at Pezwan, Jagdallak Kotal, and Jagdallak Fort, all to the north-west of Gandamak and distant from that

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place eleven miles, twenty-one miles, and twenty-three miles respectively.

On the 11th December news came in that Azmatulla Khan was stirring up the Ghilzais for an attack on Jagdallak, and things began to move. The next day one company of the 4th Gurkhas moved from a place called Ali Boghan to regimental headquarters, probably at Safed Sang. On the 14th December General Gough left Safed Sang with a small force consisting of the 9th Foot, two squadrons of the 10th Bengal Lancers, and the 4th Gurkhas. Half of this force was left at Pezwan and Gough marched to reinforce Jagdallak Fort with the rest.

A few hours after Gough arrived at Jagdallak he received an urgent telegram from Roberts. The whole British force at Kabul, some six thousand men, were besieged in the Sherpur cantonments north of the city, surrounded by thirty thousand Afghans. Gough was to come at once with his Brigade.

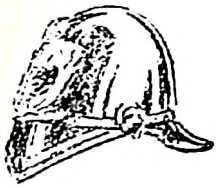
Gough had only five hundred men with him. He telegraphed that he would do his best, and spent the next few days collecting troops at Jagdallak. On the next day, 15th December, a small reinforcement, including a hundred and eighty-seven men of the 4th Gurkhas, arrived at Jagdallak, having been fired on by the Ghilzais *en route*. It arrived opportunely, for as dark was falling that night the enemy swarmed down from the hills and opened fire on the Fort from every direction. They kept their distance, however, and caused no loss of life. Shortly afterwards another company of the 4th Gurkhas arrived at Jagdallak.

The Regiment took part in all the operations and

skirmishes with the enemy in the Jagdallak Pass at this time. These operations consisted in keeping open the road from Pezwan to enable supplies and reinforcements to come up. A detachment operating from Jagdallak Fort under Major Rowcroft helped to clear the road on the 18th December. The next day a force was sent out to escort an approaching convoy into the camp. It carried out its task successfully, but not without some stiff rearguard fighting. On the 20th December another large convoy, of warm clothing and supplies, was safely escorted in, and Gough was ready to start.

For the past few days Gough had been receiving urgent orders from Sir Frederick Roberts (commanding all troops between Kabul and Jamrud, or, to put it differently, the 1st and 2nd Divisions) to advance to Kabul at once, and almost equally emphatic commands from Major-General Bright (commanding the 2nd Division) to do nothing of the sort. Gough made his choice and decided to go. On the 21st December, with a force of 1435 officers and men, he set out to march through forty miles of hostile country towards an enemy of 30,000. The Brigade, which was a highly efficient one, for all the sick and weak had been left behind, included 6 officers and 377 men of the 4th Gurkhas.

The Brigade spent the first night at Seh Baba. During the next day, between Seh Baba and Lateband, many of the transport animals—variously described by different historians as Deccan ponies and Indian camels—lay down to die. This loss of transport seems to have been a marked feature of the four-day march, for a large number of tents had



to be abandoned, and, in order that the Afghans might not profit, to be burned—a fact of which the Military Department subsequently complained somewhat bitterly.

General Gough spent the night of the 22nd December in Lateband, and on the next day, taking with him the British garrison of that post, set out for Butkhak. He advanced cautiously, with a whole regiment as rear-guard. From the direction of Kabul the sound of heavy firing could be heard, but this died away into silence as the column descended the Lateband Pass and the mountains intervened. Arriving at Butkhak, Gough heliographed to Kabul. Just as the answering message commenced, however, the sun went in and stayed in. The force marched on in total ignorance of what might lie ahead. The Logar Bridge, six miles from Sherpur, was deserted. In front rose the Siah Sang Heights, cutting off all sound of battle: the silence was uncanny. A reconnoitring party, sent out towards Kabul, returned, having met neither friend nor foe.

Gough decided to camp for the night close to the Logar Bridge. During the night a messenger from Sherpur crept into the camp with orders that Gough should march his men to Sherpur early next day. Next morning, the 24th December, Gough advanced through snow and thick fog round the base of the Siah Sang Heights, and, close to the walls of Sherpur, was met by Roberts. The march was at an end.

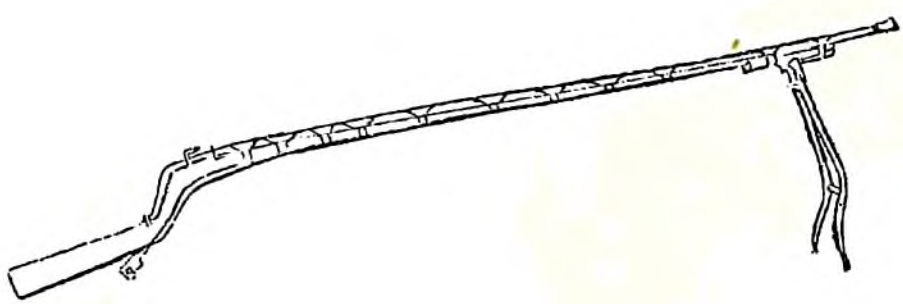
Though no hostile tribesmen had been met on the way, the risks had been great, for had the enemy leader decided to intercept Gough's advance the Brigade would almost certainly have gone down

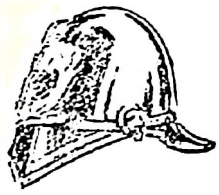
before sheer weight of numbers. The siege of Sherpur had been raised before the arrival of the Brigade, for the great Afghan attack had been launched the day before and had failed. It is difficult to say to what extent its failure was due to the approach of Gough's reinforcements, but it is certain that a large number of the Afghans had abandoned the attack and fled to the hills just after Gough's heliograph from Butkhak announced his arrival to both sides.

Where and in what manner the Regiment spent the Christmas season is not recorded, but it seems probable that some of the men were employed on the big scheme for the re-fortification of Sherpur which was put in hand at once.

On New Year's Day, 1880, the Regiment formed part of a force sent out to destroy the village of Baghwana, about five miles west of Kabul. The village was burned down, and one of the headmen was persuaded, probably somewhat painfully, to point out the graves of two British officers killed in battle there three weeks before. Four of the headmen were carried off to Kabul and hanged.

In the meantime the Bala Hissar, the huge fort forming the south-east angle of the city of Kabul, had been fortified by a system of blockhouses on the heights above, and on the 2nd January 1880 the Regiment took up quarters there, where they remained with the rest of Gough's Brigade till the end of March. The weather during January and February was very bad. It was probably rather a wearisome time for the native troops, for, as Lord Lytton remarked in a report, " While they are actually





fighting they will keep in fairly good heart, but what tries and disgusts them is picket and escort duty during the long, dead seasons of trans-frontier service. . . ." Towards the end of March, however, the weather cleared. The snow melted, the sun appeared once more, and by April troops were preparing for operations.

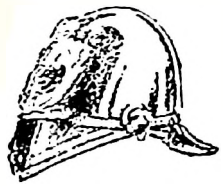
The whole Northern Afghanistan Field Force had now been reorganised. The troops at Kabul were divided into two Divisions, the 1st Division under Lieutenant-General Sir F. Roberts, and the 2nd Division under Major-General J. Ross. Ross's Division consisted of two Infantry Brigades, and Gough's Brigade (with the 4th Gurkhas) became the second of these. Acting on instructions from the Government the Commander of the Southern Afghanistan Field Force, Sir Donald Stewart, was now marching north from Kandahar towards Ghazni, ninety-three miles south of Kabul. He was coming to succeed Roberts in command of the troops at Kabul, and, indeed, to take command of all British forces in Afghanistan. He was bringing a large column with him as far as Ghazni, in order to give the Afghans a demonstration of armed force on the way. From Ghazni onwards he was to be escorted by a force sent out under General Ross for this purpose.

Ross's force, numbering some 2700 rifles, 850 sabres and 10 guns, and including the 4th Gurkhas commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel F. F. Rowcroft, left Kabul on the 16th April. Two days later it entered the Maidan Valley and endeavoured to collect supplies there. Since, however, the district

had been traversed by British troops in the previous November, there was not very much to collect. On the 21st April the force left the Maidan Valley. It marched five miles to Killa Durani, and on the next day nine miles to Sir-i-Tup, otherwise known as Top. During the march to Top the flashes of Stewart's signallers were seen in the distance, and heliographic communication was established with Stewart's force over a distance of more than fifty miles.

On the 23rd April the force arrived at Sheikabad. The hills around Sheikabad were strongly held by the enemy, and a large body of tribesmen was reported to be approaching from the north. Two companies of the 4th Gurkhas and one hundred sappers were sent out to make a road, but were surrounded by over a thousand of these tribesmen, and only succeeded in withdrawing with the support of the cavalry.

Two days later, on the 25th April, a large number of Ghilzais were found to be holding a strong position within two miles of the British camp, and a force was sent out to dislodge them. This force was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Rowcroft, 4th Gurkhas, and included a Wing of the Regiment (3 British officers, 5 Gurkha officers, and 272 men) under Major J. Hay. The Ghilzais put up a stubborn resistance and eventually had to be driven from their second line of defence at the point of the bayonet. Meanwhile enemy reinforcements appeared on Rowcroft's left, and four more companies of the 4th Gurkhas, together with two screw guns, were sent out. Fighting fiercely, the enemy were driven back with



the loss of over forty men, and one of their standards was captured. One man of the 4th Gurkhas was killed in this action and three were wounded, these being almost the only casualties suffered by General Ross's entire force during its two weeks in the field.

A few days later Sir Donald Stewart joined up with Ross, and on the 2nd May the column was back again in Kabul.

After six weeks in quarters at Kabul, partly in the Bala Hissar and partly in the Sherpur cantonments, the Regiment was again on the move. On the 16th June, as part of Gough's Brigade, it marched out from Sherpur for a demonstration in the Paghman country. The Brigade encamped near the fort of Killa Ghulam Hyder, about eleven miles west of Kabul, in order to reconnoitre the Maidan Valley, where the enemy were reported to be gathering. A few days later the Brigade turned north into the Paghman Range, enjoying the rather unusual experience of being hospitably received by a local Khan, a former officer in a British Volunteer Cavalry Regiment. Supplies were scarce, however, and on the 25th June the Brigade went on to Mir Karez, about twelve miles north-west of Kabul, where it was visited by Sir Frederick Roberts, who was making a reconnaissance in the district.

On the 29th June a cavalry patrol sent out from here towards the village of Istalif was fired upon from a village at which a prominent local enemy leader, a certain Mir Bucha, had established a post. Headquarters and four companies of the 4th Gurkhas under Lieutenant-Colonel Rowcroft formed part of the detachment which was sent out to deal with the

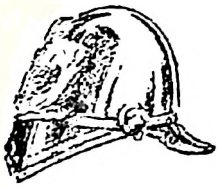
situation. The enemy were quickly put to flight, upon which the headmen of many of the surrounding villages came into camp as a sign of friendship and submission.

For a month the Brigade remained in this district, moving quietly from one village to another. Probably the climate was good, for the 67th Foot were sent out from Sherpur to join the Brigade for the benefit of their health. On the 29th July the Brigade found itself encamped at a place called Killa Haji.

Meanwhile, the British Government had at last been forced to recognise the heavy cost and unsatisfactory nature of the war in Afghanistan, and in accordance with the new Government policy Sir Donald Stewart was making his preparations for the withdrawal of the British forces from Kabul. Negotiations had been proceeding with the Amir, and an interview was arranged to take place at Zimma, about sixteen miles north of Kabul. Sir Donald and his Political Officer, Mr Lepel Griffin, spent the night of the 30th July in Gough's camp at Killa Haji, whence the Political Officer went on to Zimma next day. He was escorted by three squadrons of cavalry, but Gough was taking no chances and concealed two companies of the 4th Gurkhas about a mile from the meeting-place and held his whole force ready for action. Fortunately the meeting was an entire success.

On the 4th August the Regiment returned to Kabul. A week earlier a telegram had broken the news of a staggering defeat to British arms at Maiwand, fifty miles from Kandahar. The entire British force, numbering 3347, was besieged in Kandahar

The Second Afghan War, Second Phase, 1879-80



and in urgent need of help. For the second time in the campaign a great British force was in peril. Again the 4th Gurkhas were among those sent to the rescue. A relief force, consisting of nearly ten thousand men exclusive of camp followers, was quickly organised, and was placed in command of Sir Frederick Roberts. The force was made up of three Infantry Brigades, the third of which, commanded by Brigadier-General C. M. MacGregor, C.B., C.S.I., C.I.E., included the 4th Gurkhas, numbering 637 Gurkha officers, non-commissioned officers and men, and 7 British officers, and commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Rowcroft.

With characteristic generosity Sir Donald Stewart had given Roberts the very best troops available, and, at a time when most of the Native Army was heartily sick of Afghanistan and longing for home, the selection of the Regiment to take a part in such an arduous undertaking was a great compliment.

Such is the fame of Roberts' march to Kandahar that no detailed description is necessary; indeed, lack of space makes any such description impossible. As a military operation the march was a triumph of the unorthodox; as a personal experience it must have been extremely exhausting. The temperature often ranged from freezing point at dawn to 110° Fahrenheit at mid-day. The column marched anything up to twenty-one miles each day. Sore feet were the lot of almost everyone. Ammunition boots developed a habit of turning over at the heel, and the native shoes, with their narrow toes, seemed specially designed to raise blisters. The Gurkhas —the 2nd, the 4th, and the 5th Gurkhas all took

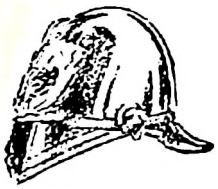
part in the march—were so tired at night that they didn't cook their food. They lived on raw flour and Indian corn, and suffered badly from dyspepsia and bowel troubles as a consequence.

There were pleasant moments, however. On the eighth day of the march the column descended from a Pass picturesquely known as the "Lion's Mouth" into a land plentiful with Indian corn, lucerne, and grapes "of wonderful size and flavour." Early in the day, before the demand sent prices soaring, a whole donkey-load of these grapes, between 80 and 100 lbs., could be purchased for three rupees.

The column had set out from Kabul on the 8th August. Nearly three weeks later, on the 27th, an advanced guard of two regiments of cavalry under Brigadier-General Hugh Gough rode wearily into Robat, twenty miles from Kandahar, and set up a heliograph. It was a dramatic moment. "Who are you?" came the question from Kandahar. The answer flashed quickly back: "The Advanced Guard of General Roberts' force." The next evening, when the force marched into Robat, the rear-guard had been left well behind, so the following day was spent resting at Robat. The men went out foraging, and one party captured three thousand sheep. "We paid the just price," remarks Sir Hugh Gough in his 'Old Memories,' and "regaled ourselves on mutton and melons."

Two days later, at 8.30 P.M. on the 31st August, the force arrived outside the Shikapur Gate, Kandahar, having marched the 318 miles from Kabul in twenty-three days.

During the morning the 1st and 2nd Brigades



seized, unopposed, Piquet Hill and Karez Hill, about a mile to the west of the city, and the whole Division pitched camp in the lee of these hills—a position which they afterwards found to be within range of the enemy's cannon. Soon after mid-day a large party was sent out to reconnoitre. It penetrated to within a mile of the enemy's advanced positions, whereupon it was pursued home with such spirit by such a large number of the enemy that the whole of the 3rd Brigade and part of the 1st Brigade were called out to defend the camp. The 3rd Brigade was engaged with the enemy from 4 P.M. till 8 P.M., during which time the 4th Gurkhas held the right centre of the position. After a series of heavy attacks the enemy finally withdrew with great loss.

Of the Battle of Kandahar, 1st September 1880, only a very brief account can be given. The task of carrying the enemy's positions was allotted to the 1st and 2nd Brigades, the 3rd Brigade (in which were the 4th Gurkhas) being ordered to form up in reserve on its own camping ground. The attack commenced about 9.30 A.M., and the two assaulting brigades, in spite of fierce resistance, advanced in fine style. As the attack swept forward the 3rd Brigade followed up in reserve, from a position in advance of Karez Hill, through the Babawali Pass, and as far as the village of Mazra, about five miles from Kandahar. The Afghans abandoned their camp, and soon after mid-day the victory was complete.

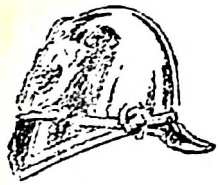
The casualties to the Regiment during the Battle of Kandahar were as follows: 1 rank and file killed; 1 British officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Rowcroft, 1 Gurkha officer, and 4 rank and file wounded.

The moment was now propitious for a general retirement of British troops from Afghanistan; indeed for some weeks past Sir Donald Stewart had been busy evacuating his troops from Kabul *via* the Khyber. The 3rd Brigade, with the 4th Gurkhas, was the first to march from Kandahar. Accompanied by Sir Frederick Roberts, whose health had temporarily broken down and who was returning to India, the Brigade left Kandahar for Quetta on the 8th September. It reached Chaman, about half-way to Quetta, on the 14th September, and the next day, at Killa Abdulla, a force was detached "for special service to Kawas." This force, of which the Regiment formed the main body, was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Rowcroft. The purpose of the expedition is not clear, for it is merely stated that, having visited Kawas, the detachment remained at Kach for a time, rejoining Brigade Headquarters on the 28th September.

Before returning to India the Regiment was destined for one more expedition. The Marris, a tribe inhabiting the hilly country east of the Bolan Pass, had given a lot of trouble during the previous months, and had crowned their misdeeds by setting upon a British convoy and capturing no less than £15,000 worth of treasure. Brigadier-General MacGregor was told off to pay them a visit.

The Brigade was reorganised, either at Harnai or at Sibi, in the early part of October, and on the 11th October the column set off for Kahan, the principal Marri village. The road traversed a series of practically impassable mountain ranges and narrow gorges, and it was not till the 6th November

The Second Afghan War, Second Phase, 1879-80



that Kahan was reached. The Marris submitted promptly. They gladly paid a fine of over fifty thousand rupees—no doubt calculating swiftly that they were still left with a profit of something over ten thousand pounds—and the expedition retired in peace.

The Brigade was broken up at Drigri, on the British frontier, on the 14th November, and two days later the Regiment reached Rajahpur in British territory. It crossed the Indus at Mithankot, marched to Khanpur, and thence travelled by rail to Amritsar, arriving on the 25th November. From Amritsar the Regiment proceeded by route march to Bakloh, where it arrived on the 9th December 1880.

For its services in the second phase of the Second Afghan War the Regiment received two further clasps for the Afghan Medal, those for "Kabul" and "Kandahar," while a special Bronze Star was awarded to those who took part in Roberts' march to Kandahar.

The following officers served with the Regiment during both phases of the Second Afghan War, and received the Afghan Medal with clasps for Ali Masjid, Kabul and Kandahar, and also the Bronze Star for the march from Kabul to Kandahar :—

Capt. E. P. Mainwaring.
Lieut. G. W. Rogers.
Lieut. C. A. Mercer.
Lieut. H. J. Bolton.

Lieutenant James Hay served with the Regiment in the operations at Ali Masjid and at Sheikabad, and received the Afghan Medal with clasp for Ali Masjid. Lieutenant C. G. Adye was attached to

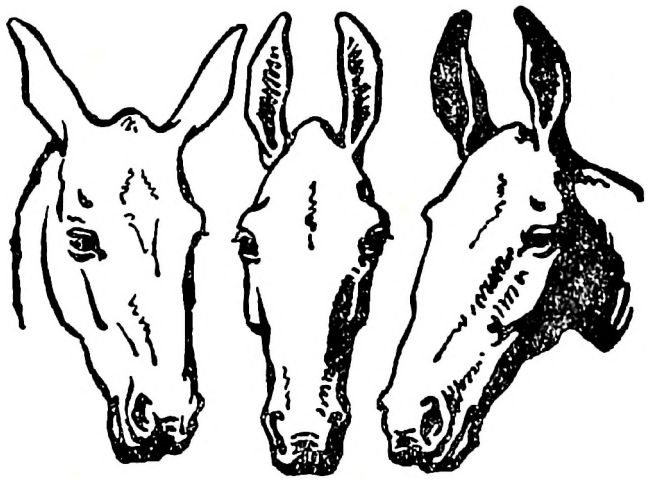
the Regiment during the first phase of the Second Afghan War. Captain A. Evans-Gordon was attached to the Regiment during the second phase.

In 1882 the Regiment won the Commander-in-Chief's prize for musketry. Later that year Major G. W. Rogers, an officer whose great interest in the musketry of the Regiment had raised it to such a high level, went to England. He took with him Pensioned Subadar Singbir Ghurtie Bahadur.

In the winters of 1882 and 1883 the Regiment attended the Camp of Exercise at Mian Mir. It remained at Bakloh all 1884, in November of which year two hundred of all ranks acted as guard of honour at the installation of the Raja of Chamba.

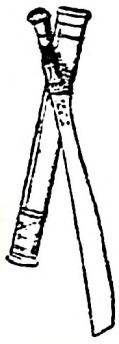
In the spring of 1885 the Regiment attended the Durbar Camp for the Amir of Kabul at Rawal Pindi, being brigaded with the 4th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade and the 1st and 5th Gurkhas; it also furnished the Viceroy's Guard at Simla during 1882 and 1885.

During the winter 1885-86 the Regiment was present at a big Camp of Exercise at Delhi. At the march past there the Commander-in-Chief was attended by Pensioned Subadar-Major Ballea Thapa of the 4th Gurkhas.



CHAPTER IV.

Raising of the 2nd Battalion, 1886



DURING the winter of 1885-86 the Government, on the advice of the new Commander-in-Chief, Sir Frederick Roberts, decided to increase the number of Gurkha battalions in order to compensate for the disbandment of certain Indian units. Each of the first five Gurkha regiments was to have a second battalion; this was to be raised partly by transfer of a nucleus from its parent battalion and partly either from volunteers from other Gurkha regiments or from recruits supplied by the Nepal Durbar (for which special arrangements were made with the Government of Nepal).

The formation of the 2/4th was directed by a special Army Circular, dated 10th April 1886, and by a General Order of the Commander-in-Chief, dated 22nd April, the latter stating that the Battalion was to be raised at Bakloh and was to be of the same strength as the 1st Battalion and in all respects similarly equipped. Major King Harman was appointed to raise the Battalion, and commanded it for six years.

The 2nd Battalion 4th Gurkhas was raised largely from recruits supplied by the Nepal Durbar, at whose request no recruiting parties were sent. This method was probably the only one by which troops could

Raising of the 2nd Battalion, 1886

have been raised in a short time, but, as will be seen, it was not entirely satisfactory.

A nucleus of picked Gurkha officers, non-commissioned officers, and sepoys was immediately transferred to the new Battalion from the 1st Battalion to provide a Subadar Major, 4 Subadars, 5 Jemadars, a Havildar Major, 27 Havildars, and 29 Naiks. Subadar Kulpatti Gurung was transferred as Subadar Major, and the others all obtained promotion on transfer. Three buglers were also transferred, one of them as Bugle Major.

The recruits began arriving at Bakloh in April 1886. They were well looked after by specially chosen men from the 1st Battalion, but there was, nevertheless, a good deal of discontent. In May a large number of recruits refused to take their first month's pay, complaining that they had either been forcibly pressed into service, or else cajoled with promises of higher pay. They accepted their pay only after Major King Harman had addressed them.

By the end of June the new Battalion was up to strength. In all 686 recruits had arrived, and, in addition, two Gurkha companies had been transferred to the Battalion from the 38th Bengal Infantry.

The north-west end of the Bakloh ridge above Chilama spur had been selected as the permanent site of the Battalion, but no barracks had been provided. The first task was to clear the site, and this work was well in hand by the autumn of 1886, but the barracks were not completed until the spring of 1888. Meanwhile the men had to live in tents, moving down to Madhopore for the first two winters

Raising of the 2nd Battalion, 1886

as a result of strong representations by Colonel King Harman.

At first the men did not take kindly to discipline. Absences from parade were frequent, and between April and the end of the year 1886 no less than fifty-one men deserted. The cause of the trouble was probably due to a certain amount of compulsion in the manner of recruiting. In addition, several men brought their wives, for whom no accommodation could be found. Finally the men transferred from the 38th Bengal Infantry included a number of Gurkhas of mixed blood; these men were a drag on the Battalion for years.

To add to the Commandant's difficulties he alone of the eight British officers with the Battalion had had any previous experience of Gurkhas. However, sympathetic but firm discipline and the keenness of all the officers and N.C.O.'s soon had its effect, and training went speedily ahead.

The dress of the Battalion at this time left much to be desired. Colonel King Harman had asked for Government uniform, but was ordered to make his own arrangements. He accordingly made a contract with an Englishman who had a cloth factory near Madhopore. Naturally this dress did not lend itself to smartness and uniformity, and was inclined to give both men and officers a "go-as-you-please" appearance.

In spite of these many unpropitious circumstances attending its formation, the Battalion, under the able command of Colonel King Harman, became efficient in a remarkably short time, and when, in April 1888, it was inspected by the Commander-in-

Raising of the 2nd Battalion, 188

Chief, "His Excellency was very favourably impressed with the appearance and set up of the men. It was evident that they had been carefully looked after, and that every pains had been taken to make this young battalion efficient."

The "young battalion" saw service at a remarkably early age, for in August 1889 it was ordered to Burma to take part in the Chin Lushai Expedition.

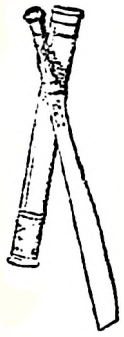
Chin Lushai Expeditio and subsequent opera tions, 1889-1890-189

The Chins and the Lushais are two wild tribes inhabiting the Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills in the south-east of Assam. The Chin Hills run in a general direction north and south close to the frontier of Burma, while the Lushai Hills run west of the Chin Hills, roughly parallel with them, and close to the Chittagong region of Bengal.

Both the Chins and the Lushais were well built, but prone to drunkenness. Their arms were primitive—flint-lock muskets, *dahs*, spears, and bows and arrows. Both tribes were savage and aggressive, and had been giving a great deal of trouble to their neighbours. The Chins constantly raided over the frontier into Burma and carried off as slaves those whom they captured. The Lushais made similar raids into Bengal, and had, moreover, added to their misdeeds by the murder of Captain Stewart, a British officer on survey duty. It was accordingly decided to proceed against these unruly tribes for the dual purpose of teaching them how to behave and of opening up a road from Burma through their country into Bengal.

The difficulties which were to be encountered in the campaign arose mainly from the country. The

Chin Lushai Expedition and subsequent operations, 1889-1890-1891



slopes of the hills were steep, divided by deep ravines, and, in the lower valleys, covered with dense jungle. The tribesmen were exasperating rather than brave. They were adepts at surprise, ambush, and night work. They would stalk a column for days, watching their opportunity; at night they would wriggle up as silently as snakes to shoot sentries from a distance of a few feet; but they were unwilling to stand in battle. The plan of operations was accordingly based on the destruction of villages.

The expedition was to be carried out by three columns. A Northern Column was to operate from Fort White to subjugate the Northern Chin tribes. A Southern Column, under Brigadier-General W. P. Symons, was to advance from Gangow northward *via* Kan to Haka. A third column, under Colonel V. W. Tregear, was to advance from Chittagong eastwards through the Lushai country and to make contact with the Southern Column in the vicinity of Haka.

The Battalion saw service with both parts of the Expedition. The Right Wing formed part of the Southern Column, which was made up as follows :—

No. 1 Bengal Mountain Battery.
Two companies Queen's Own Sappers and Miners.
1st Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers.
2nd Madras Infantry.
2/4th Gurkhas (less one Wing).

The Left Wing of the Battalion served with the Chittagong Column, which consisted of :—

One company Bengal Sappers and Miners.
3rd Bengal Infantry.
28th Bombay Pioneers.
2/2nd Gurkhas.
Wing 2/4th Gurkhas.

The two wings of the Battalion were actually separated until April 1891, and their services are accordingly given separately.

The Headquarters and Right Wing of the Battalion marched from Bakloh on the 23rd October 1889 and reached Calcutta on the 2nd November, on which date Colonel King Harman, having rejoined from other duties, resumed command. The British officers with this Wing of the Battalion were as follows :—

Lieut.-Col. M. J. King Harman, Commanding.
Capt. P. M. Carnegy, Wing Commander.
Lieut. H. Hamilton, Adjutant.
Lieut. P. Malcolm.
Surgeon-Major A. Scott-Reid, I.M.S.

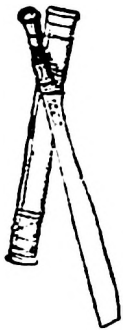
Captain F. M. Rundall joined the Wing later.

The Wing embarked at Calcutta on the 5th November on H.M.S. *Clive* and sailed for Rangoon, where it arrived four days later. It proceeded to Prome by rail, and thence up the Irrawaddi by river steamer to Pakokku, where it arrived on the 14th November. It left Pakokku on the 27th and 28th November and reached Gangow on the 9th and 10th December after a march of 140 miles.

On arrival at Gangow the Wing joined the Southern Column of the Chin Lushai Expedition under Brigadier-General Symons, the other troops forming this column having left Pakokku on the 23rd November and joined the column on the 7th December.

Almost immediately a large part of Symons' force, including 410 men of the Right Wing of the 2/4th Gurkhas, set out on their march northward to Haka.

Right Wing of the Battalion



Their task was to construct a mule road to Haka and to subjugate the tribes through whose lands they would pass on the way. Later they were to advance west from Haka and to make contact with the Chittagong Column under Tregear, thus opening up a route from Burma to Bengal. To maintain this route, and to establish British authority generally, they were to build permanent posts at various places.

The march to Haka, a distance of about seventy miles, was scheduled to take twelve days, but, though little opposition was encountered, the country was so difficult that the whole force had to be employed making the road fit for mules and the march took sixty-six days instead of the scheduled twelve.

This delay was not without its compensations. The Chins expected us to make a quick advance, do some damage, and then retire. The slow advance enabled us to get into touch with the tribes and to extend our influence, with the result that tribe after tribe submitted to our terms.

During the advance no organised resistance was encountered, except at Taungtek, half-way between Kan and Haka. Here on the 28th December a force of five hundred men made a poor attempt to oppose our advance, but dispersed as soon as attacked by the column.

Malaria was a regular scourge; in fact it was so universal that at one time it threatened to frustrate all the plans of the campaign. Only 7 British officers and 349 native troops escaped it.

For some reminiscences of this period, during which the 2nd Battalion received its baptism of fire,

the Regiment is indebted to the kindness of that very distinguished soldier, Major-General Sir James Stewart, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.B., Colonel of the 5th (Royal) Gurkhas :—

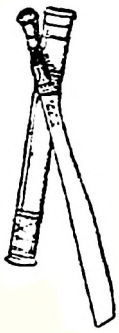
Right Wing of the Battalion

" The advance into the hills was practically unopposed, but it entailed very hard work cutting paths and making roads through virgin forest. Perhaps this was the reason why the troops began to suffer from a very malignant form of fever. At most of the camps the Gurkhas showed how at home they were in bamboo forest. They rigged up shelters and platforms, and where the stay extended over more than a day or so they even provided beds and tables.

" At one camp in rather thick bush the General and I and some of the Staff were in shelters, and a little way off was a Gurkha piquet. In the night, or rather towards morning, we heard the piquet firing. The General insisted on going up to the piquet and I had to go with him. We were just in time to see some Chins bolting, and the General's only regret was that he had not a shot-gun, as he could have made sure of a ' right and left ' ! The Chins had crept up through the forest and tried to rush the piquet. They had no rifles or guns. The Gurkhas seemed thoroughly to have enjoyed the brush. We learnt then that if you cut a path or opening in jungle the Chins would not cross it willingly—they had some idea that devils occupied such open spaces. Perhaps the more natural explanation was that their ' experts ' realised that they were more likely to be observed under such conditions.

" As our advance continued the sickness increased, and at last all the British officers with the Wing of the 2/4th Gurkhas were laid up. General Symons said to me, ' The 4th must have a British officer with them. You are an officer of Gurkhas, so I shall attach you to them.' So as a very young officer I found myself in command of, and the only British officer with, this Wing of the 2/4th Gurkhas—a very proud position. But it was made very easy for me by the Gurkha officers, N.C.O.'s, and the men themselves.

Right Wing of the Battalion



I remember Subadar Madho Rana especially, and I am glad to say he became a very distinguished officer of the Regiment, and I met him later when he was A.D.C. to the Viceroy.

" At one stage it was reported that we were to be opposed. The 4th Gurkhas were put in the advanced guard. We had to advance through scrub jungle with very high grass, and saw ahead of us an obvious stockade. Suddenly a Gurkha shouted out that he had been wounded. I was rather angry and said, ' Ridiculous. There has been no firing as yet.' But when I went up to the man I found a ' pangi ' (bamboo stake, hardened in fire) had gone clean through his thigh. I certainly felt corrected ! After that we advanced with increased caution, the Gurkhas clearing the way with their kukris. As we approached the stockade we came under some fire, directed from rifles and guns through hollow bamboos, but the men rushed the position with the greatest dash, and we continued to advance without further opposition. I did indeed feel proud ! The 2/4th Gurkhas had received their initiation to fire under me, and had shown that spirit which they were later to show so splendidly in really serious engagements.

" Soon after this I lost my command and rejoined my Staff appointment, for some of the regimental officers returned. Then the Lushai wing linked up with the Head-quarters, and my further experiences with the Battalion were only those of a junior Staff officer and the happy ones of a friend. One of the last times I saw them in the Chin country was when some headmen of a tribe came in to make peace. We had to wait several days for them to recover from a drunken debauch on which they had engaged after they had decided to surrender. The General especially selected the 4th to form the guard of honour, as he felt sure their impressive smartness would form a striking contrast to the ragged and filthy deputation. It did ! "

The force eventually reached Haka on the 13th February 1890. The mule path to Haka was not completed until the 26th February. Meanwhile,

important reconnaissances were carried out to the west, and on the 26th touch was obtained with the Chittagong Column at Tav, fifty-two miles west of Haka. The effect upon the tribes was so great that the heads of Lieutenant Stewart and two British soldiers, who had been killed a year before, were given up and many tribes submitted.

Right Wing of the Battalion

On the 6th March 1890, Colonel King Harman having been invalided, the officiating command devolved upon Major Sir C. Leslie.

A few days later troops from Haka advanced, in conjunction with a detachment of the Northern Column from Fort White, towards Falam, the capital of the Tashon tribe. They reached this village without opposition, obtained its submission, and inflicted a fine of Rs. 5000. One hundred and fifty rifles of the Wing of the 2/4th Gurkhas took part in this expedition. The remainder of the season was spent in numerous reconnaissances and explorations.

Towards the end of April the tribes made their submission and the campaign was brought to a close. The Indian Medal with clasp, "Chin Lushai 1889-1890," was granted to all troops employed from the 15th November 1889 until the 30th April 1890.

The following is an extract from Brigadier-General Symons' despatch at the close of the campaign :—

"The 2nd Battalion 4th Gurkhas, a young regiment on their first experience of active service, has pleased me greatly. They give every promise of sustaining the reputation and traditions gained in our service by their older battalions."

During April most of the troops were withdrawn. Garrisons were left at Haka and Fort White, however, and the Headquarters and Right Wing of the 2/4th

Right Wing of the Battalion

were ordered to Fort White to relieve the 42nd (now the 6th) Gurkhas. Under Major Sir C. Leslie, Captain Carnegy, and Lieutenant Battye they proceeded thither in various parties and by different routes, and were all united in Fort White by the 24th April 1890.

With the withdrawal of the main body of the expedition the Chin Hills were divided into two administrative districts, the Northern District to be administered from Fort White and the Southern District from Haka. During most of 1890 Captain F. M. Rundall, 1/4th Gurkhas attached, was in charge of the Northern District as Political Officer at Fort White. This fort was garrisoned by two guns of No. 2 Mountain Battery and detachments of the 4th Madras Pioneers, 39th Garhwalis, and 2/4th Gurkhas.

The summer of 1890 passed uneventfully, but the Wing suffered very severely from malaria. On the 19th August, Major Sir C. Leslie having been invalided, Captain Rundall took over the duties of officiating commandant. On the same day Subadar Major Kulpatti Gurung Bahadur was promoted to the 1st Class of the Order of British India with the title of " Sirdar Bahadur."

During the autumn of 1890 the tribes under Captain Rundall's control became very unruly, especially the Kanhows to the north, who had made four raids into Burma. Early in 1891, therefore, Rundall was ordered to march against the Kanhows in conjunction with a detachment of the 12th Burma Infantry from Auktang. He was ordered to meet this detachment at Mwelpi, eighty miles north of Fort White.

On the 20th January 1891 Rundall left Fort White

with 2 guns and about 350 men, 150 of whom were of the 2/4 Gurkhas. His first task was to make a strong post at Tiddim, which was reached on the 24th January. Here rations and coolie transport were collected. Three hundred coolies were obtained, but even this number was barely adequate to carry the baggage and fourteen days' rations. Men's kits were cut down to 12½ lb., and only 60 lb. could be allowed for a mess of nine officers, who carried their own plates, cutlery, &c., in their haversacks.

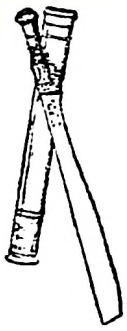
Right Wing of the Battalion

Leaving 100 men at Tiddim, Rundall marched for Mwelpi *via* Tunzun on the 11th February. The route to Tunzun was so difficult that it took three days to cover the twenty miles involved. Leaving his guns and 140 men at Tunzun to overawe the inhabitants, who were truculent, Rundall left for Mwelpi with the remainder of his force (only 90 men) on the 16th. Before starting he warned the Kanhow chiefs that he would destroy Tunzun if they had not complied with the British terms before his return.

Mwelpi was reached on the 17th. There was no trace of the detachment from Auktang there, so Rundall advanced to Shielmong in the hopes of finding it. Still there was no trace of it, and Rundall, who had now reached the limit of his supply radius, returned to Tunzun. Later it transpired that the Auktang detachment had lost its way and returned to Auktang.

Rundall reached Tunzun on the 21st to find that the British terms had not been complied with. He therefore quietly surrounded the village before daybreak on the 22nd, and, after a sharp action in

Right Wing of the Battalion



which twelve Kanhows were killed, received its submission.

He set out on his return on the 24th February and arrived back at Fort White on the 28th, leaving a garrison of 100 men at Tiddim, which was later made a permanent post.

This expedition was entirely successful and resulted in the release of 39 Burman captives and the payment of tribute and a fine.

On the 20th February 1891, shortly before the return of the above expedition, the name of the Regiment was changed by a Governor-General's Order from the "4th Gurkha Regiment" to the "4th Gurkha (Rifle) Regiment."

During March 1891 there was more trouble with the tribes, and Captain Rundall led a force to Falam, where he effected a junction with a force from Haka. The Tashon chiefs submitted without fighting.

On the 25th March Major Sir C. Leslie, having rejoined, took over the officiating command of the Battalion.

The Right Wing was now ordered to return to Bakloh, and left Fort White on the 30th March. On the first march out, however, it was ordered to take part in the expedition to Manipur. It reached Kalemyo on the 2nd April, proceeded by forced marches to Tamu, and thence to Palel in Manipur, where it arrived on the 14th April. At Palel it was joined by the Left Wing of the Battalion, the last detachment of which arrived on the 24th April 1891.

We must now turn to the movements of the Left Wing of the Battalion up to the time of its arrival at Palel.

The Left Wing of the Battalion marched from Bakloh on the 2nd November 1889, and, having been detained at Pathankot, arrived in Calcutta on the 20th November. Here Major Sir C. Leslie took over command. Two days later the Wing embarked at Calcutta on board H.M.S. *Clive*, reaching Chittagong on the 25th November. It proceeded thence by river steamer up the Karnafuli, arriving at Rangamattea on the 2nd December. After a long delay it left Rangamattea on the 18th January 1890 and arrived at Demagiri, the base of the Chittagong Column, on the 21st January. The British officers with the Left Wing of the Battalion at this time were as follows :—

The Left Wing of the Battalion

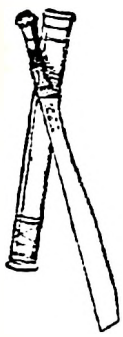
Major Sir C. Leslie.
Capt. F. M. Drury, Wing Commander.
Lieut. A. Grant.
Lieut. H. C. C. Ducat.
Capt. F. C. Clarkson, I.M.S.

On arrival at Demagiri the Wing joined the Chittagong Column of the Chin Lushai Expedition under Colonel V. W. Tregear.

From Demagiri the Chittagong Column pushed slowly eastward towards Haka, encountering the same difficulties as the Southern Column, but by the 26th February an advanced party made contact with an advanced party of the Southern Column at Tav.

The Left Wing of the Battalion, which left Demagiri on the 13th February 1890, was occupied in building Fort Tregear and in making the road towards Haka. The road-making was slow work, for the difficulties of country and climate were great. The bamboo and cane jungle was so dense that the sappers and miners with the force could make no progress, and

The Left Wing of the Battalion



the Left Wing was called in to their aid. The men cleared the ground with their kukris, working almost naked in the moist heat. Eventually the Wing cut its way through, arriving at Haka on the 1st April and there joining the Right Wing of the Battalion for a few days. The road was not completed until twelve days later.

The following is an extract from Colonel Tregear's despatch at the conclusion of operations :—

> "My remarks regarding the manner in which Gurkhas work apply equally to the men of the 2/4th Gurkhas, which is as smart a body of men as one could ever wish to serve with."

During April 1890, as already stated, the bulk of the troops was withdrawn and the Field Force was broken up. In accordance, however, with the policy of maintaining posts in the country garrison forces were left at Fort White and Haka. It has already been mentioned that the Right Wing of the Battalion formed part of the garrison at Fort White. The Left Wing of the Battalion was selected for similar duty at Haka, and was stationed there until the middle of March 1891. The only other troops at Haka were a company of sappers and a detachment of the Supply and Transport Corps. No mountain guns were left.

At Haka the Wing was commanded first by Captain Drury and later by Captain Carnegy.

The quarters at Haka consisted of log huts thatched with grass for officers and men. These were surrounded by a log stockade, loopholed, and with blockhouses for flank defence, and outside the

stockade was a ditch filled with spiked bamboo stakes. The water supply was from a well sunk by the sappers. Around the post the country was free from jungle for a mile or two, but beyond that there stretched in every direction a thick jungle of bamboo, scrub, pine trees, etc., the land being very hilly and cut up with deep nullahs.

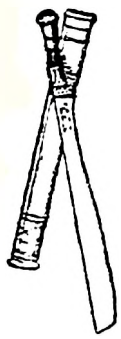
The Left Wing of the Battalion

At Haka, as at Fort White, the autumn of 1890 was a period of unrest and trouble. There was much hostility among the independent Baungshe tribes around Haka. The village of Thetta, about two long marches from Haka, was especially troublesome, and on the 21st December the men of that village crowned their various misdeeds with the murder of an Assistant Superintendent of Police and the attempted murder of the Political Officer.

Punitive action was obviously necessary, and Captain Carnegy was ordered to take and burn the village.

Carnegy pointed out that the village was known to be strongly stockaded, and that he had not sufficient troops to ensure its capture. He suggested that he should wait until reinforced by a mountain battery, and by the 39th Garhwalis, under orders from Haka, but his suggestions were overruled and he was ordered to proceed at once. His force thus consisted of 133 Gurkhas, a few sappers, and a mule transport column carrying three days' rations, being accompanied in addition by Mr D. Ross, Political Officer at Haka, Lieutenant B. A. James, R.E., and a friendly old Haka village chief and some native guides. Lieutenant James came as a volunteer, having arrived at Haka a day or two before with a company of Burma Sappers.

The Left Wing of the Battalion



The story of the expedition may be continued in the words of Lieutenant A. Grant, 2/4th Gurkhas :

"We left Haka on the 1st January 1891. The way led by Chin tracks, all up and down hill, mostly through dense scrub jungle, progress being very slow as the advance guard 'flankers' had to clear a path in many places with their kookeries. The Sappers moved with the baggage mules, improving the track where necessary and forming the rear-guard.

"The first day out there was no opposition, but trees had been felled to obstruct the track. We bivouacked about 4 P.M. in a clearing in the jungle, forming a hollow square with transport in the centre. Had a peaceful night, not a shot fired.

"On the second day nothing happened until about 2 P.M., when within about two miles of Thetta village. I was in command of the advance guard. As progress was very slow and it was getting late, I went forward with my orderly and was moving along the track ahead of the leading files of the advance guard, urging them to move quicker, when suddenly a volley was fired by some Chins lying in ambush close on our right. My orderly, who was moving just ahead of me and to my right, was mortally wounded—shot through both lungs, and died almost at once. The Chins were armed with old 'Tower' guns with flint-locks—very effective at short range. All we saw on the road was the smoke. The flankers fired at the Chins as they bolted downhill but did not hit one.

"From this point we continued the advance in a skirmishing line at close intervals to right and left of the track, which led down a steep spur, and soon we saw the thatched roofs of Thetta village lying below us less than a mile away.

"Had we had a mountain battery, or even hand grenades, all might have gone well.

"As we advanced parties of Chins fired wild volleys at intervals, and there was great difficulty in checking our men from wasting a lot of ammunition, blazing away at nothing, as, this being their first experience of bush fighting, they were inclined to be rather jumpy.

" Finally, about 4 P.M., we reached the village, but were confronted with a log stockade about eight feet high and pointed at the top and loop-holed. The Chins manned this stockade, opening fire on us at close range ; luckily the shots were high and there were no casualties. Carnegy gave the order for every one to take cover behind a bank facing the stockade, leaving Ducat in command. Since it was obvious that the stockade could not be taken by frontal attack, he, James the Sapper, and I moved a short way off to our left flank to reconnoitre the position and to see if there was any possible way of turning the stockade, the fire from which had ceased. We stood up for a moment in order to get a better view, James in the centre. As we did so the Chins fired another volley from the stockade, and James was shot dead through the head. Immediately after this Ross, the Political Officer, sent word to Carnegy that, through the Haka chief who was with him, he had got a message from the Thetta chief offering to submit and pay a fine provided the village of Thetta was spared and not burned. It was now getting late. Ross strongly advised Carnegy to agree to the terms—it was the best way out of a bad business—and Carnegy agreed to suspend hostilities.

" We bivouacked outside the village for the night. Early next morning Ross and the Thetta head chief agreed to the terms of peace, Thetta paying a very nominal fine—a few useless guns and one bison.

" Carnegy was not to blame, and on our return to Haka all further operations were ordered to be suspended until the arrival of a British mountain battery and the 39th Garhwalis.

" In addition to Lieutenant James and my Gurkha orderly, as far as I remember, we only had one other Gurkha killed, but had we carried on with the attack on the village we should probably have had many more casualties.

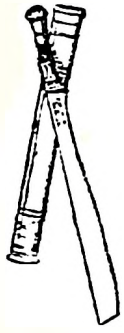
" In 1893, when rewards for various operations in Burma and the Chin Hills were published, much to our surprise the Thetta Column received the clasp ' Burma, 1891.'

" On our return to Haka Captain Harrison, R.E. (Burma Sappers), started making hand grenades. These grenades were the exact pattern of those first used by us in France

The Left Wing of the Battalion

in 1914. Jam tins, gun-cotton primer, and Bickford fuse and detonator. We had ' bombing practice ' with the above, but never had occasion for their actual use during the rest of our stay in the Chin Hills."

The Left Wing of the Battalion



Since the first expedition to Thetta had not been a success, a second and much larger one was at once organised. This was to visit Thetta again and to explore the Baungshe country thoroughly. On the 4th February, therefore, Carnegy again marched out from Haka, arriving at Thetta the next day. He had with him 147 Rifles of the 2/4th Gurkhas and 49 Rifles of the 4th Madras Pioneers, and at Thetta he joined up with a column from Gangow consisting of 176 Rifles of the 39th Garhwalis under Colonel E. P. Mainwaring, who had served for many years with the 4th Gurkhas.

The two columns remained at Thetta until the 14th February, overawed the villagers, and enforced payment of a fine. Then, having been joined by two guns of No. 2 Mountain Battery, the force, under the command of Colonel Mainwaring, marched about twenty-two miles south-west to the large village of Shurkwa. Shurkwa was reached on the 17th February, and the village surrendered without firing a shot, the inhabitants promising to hand over all their captured slaves. Two days later, the slaves having been handed over to the British troops, the force returned to Haka, where it arrived on the 22nd February. This successful expedition had resulted in the submission of eight villages, including Shurkwa, and the surrender of thirteen slaves.

Towards the end of March the Left Wing of the Battalion, like the Right Wing, was ordered to return

to Bakloh, and left Haka. It arrived at Kan on the 30th March and there received orders to take part in the Manipur Expedition. It left Kan on the 1st April, arriving at Kalemyo on the 5th (perhaps the day after the Right Wing of the Battalion had left that place), proceeded by forced marches to Tamu, and arrived at Palel, and there joined the Right Wing of the Battalion on the 24th April.

The Left Wing of the Battalion

The Whole Battalion. Manipur Expedition, 1891

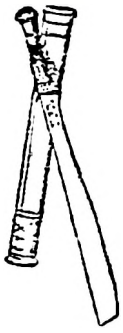
The Battalion now formed part of the Tamu Column of the Manipur Field Force under Major-General J. Graham, C.B.

At this point it is convenient to give a short description of the events which made necessary the despatch of a force into Manipur.

Manipur is a protected state in the south-east of Assam. In area it is rather larger than Wales, most of it being very mountainous. The Manipuris are tall, strong, good looking and clean, but they are very treacherous. Since 1879 the Maharaja of Manipur had been a friend and an ally of the British. In 1890, however, a revolution in the State was engineered by the Senapati, or Commander-in-Chief of the Manipuri Army, and the Maharaja had fled. The Government of India looked with disfavour on the Senapati, and decided to deport him.

There were present in the town of Manipur at that time the British Political Resident, Mr Grimwood, his wife, and a force of one hundred men of the 43rd Gurkhas (now the 2/8th Gurkha Rifles) with their officers. As this force was obviously inadequate for the arrest of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the State, Mr Quinton, Chief Commissioner

The Whole Battalion. Manipur Expedition, 1891



of Assam, was sent to Manipur with four hundred men of the 42nd and 44th Gurkhas (now the 6th and 1/8th Gurkha Rifles) under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Skene, and arrived at the capital early on the 22nd March 1891.

From the outset Quinton's task was a hazardous one. The Manipuri Army was strong in numbers, warlike in spirit, and well armed with rifles and ammunition. It possessed, moreover, four excellent guns. Quinton, on the other hand, had no guns, and his five hundred men were short of small arms ammunition. It is hardly surprising that he met with disaster.

At dawn on the 24th March 1891 Colonel Skene opened his attack on the Senapati's palace. The attack failed. By the afternoon Quinton, the Grimwoods, Skene, and what remained of the British troops were besieged in the Residency and under heavy shell-fire.

Towards evening the situation became impossible. Quinton sent to ask the Senapati on what terms he would cease fire, and a little later he went out with Grimwood, Skene, and two other officers to discuss these terms. None of the party ever returned. The five of them reached the Senapati's palace, but were at once bound and fettered. Grimwood was spared suffering by the spear-thrust of a friendly native, but the other four were led out, later in the night, to execution.

At about midnight a voice called into the Residency grounds, "The Chief Commissioner will not return," and shortly afterwards the artillery bombardment of the Residency was renewed. There

was nothing for it but flight. The column assembled, slipped out through the Residency grounds, and headed for Cachar, some hundred miles to the west.

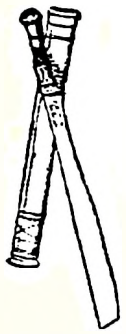
For nearly two days the party fled westward, threatened by native scalp-hunters and by the Senapati's troops. Mrs Grimwood acted as guide, and, under the most exhausting conditions, behaved with very great courage. On the second day out the party was ambushed by a strong piquet of enemy sepoys, and, in the midst of the ensuing engagement, a fresh column of about two hundred men was seen advancing swiftly towards the position. There was a moment of agonised suspense—and then the new arrivals turned out to be a relieving force of the 43rd Gurkhas from Cachar. The two columns joined forces, and nine days later Mrs Grimwood arrived safely in Cachar.

Meanwhile, news of the disaster at Manipur had quickly reached Tamu, from which Lieutenant C. W. J. Grant, 12th Burma Regiment, fought his way forward with eighty men to a village called Thobal, and held it for ten days against some thousands of Manipuris (supported by artillery) while he ascertained the fate of Quinton, Grimwood, and others. He then retired to Tamu with his news, subsequently receiving the V.C. and a Brevet Majority for the exploit.

A punitive expedition of 9 mountain guns and nearly 5000 rifles was hastily organised, and set out for Manipur about the middle of April. It consisted of three columns, advancing south from Kohima, east from Cachar, and north from Tamu respectively. As already stated, the 2/4th Gurkhas formed

The Whole Battalion. Manipur Expedition, 1891

The Whole Battalion. Manipur Expedition, 1891



part of the Tamu Column, which was composed as follows :—

No. 2 Mountain Battery.
4th Battalion King's Royal Rifles.
12th and 32nd (Burma) Madras Infantry.
2/4th Gurkhas.

The Tamu Column was the only one to encounter serious opposition. It left Tamu on the 23rd April 1891 and advanced to Palel without incident. At Bapam, however, about six miles north of Palel, a large number of the enemy was found occupying a strong position, and a fierce engagement took place.

Lieutenant C. W. J. Grant took part in this engagement, and three days later described it in a letter written to his people from Manipur. It is therefore possible to tell the story in his own words :—

" . . . On the 25th I went out from Palel with fifty of my men, fifty of our Mounted Infantry under Cox, and fifty 2nd-4th Ghoorkas. We had orders only to reconnoitre enemy's position, not to attack, as remainder were to arrive that morning.

" The road ran along the plain due north towards Manipur, with open plain on left and hills right. Saw the enemy on the hills and in a strong mud fort one thousand yards from hills in the open. I worked along the hills and drove the enemy out of them, as we found them unexpectedly, and had to fight in spite of orders. Then Drury went on to the General to say we had them in a trap, and would he come out with guns and more men and slate them. Then he sent the Mounted Infantry to the left to the north-west of the enemy, and we worked behind the hills to the north-east, thus cutting them off from Manipur. We went behind a hill and waited.

" At 11.30 we saw from the top of our hill the column from Palel, two mountain guns, and one hundred 2nd-4th

Ghoorkas." (Actually there were four guns and two hundred men of the 2/4th, under Captain Rundall.) "The guns went to a hill a thousand yards to the east of the enemy's fort, and we watched the fun. The first shell went plump into the fort; soon they started shrapnel and made lovely practice, the enemy replying with two small guns and rifles. Then we got impatient and advanced, and worked round to their west flank. The guns went on sending common shell and shrapnel into the fort till we masked their fire. The Ghoorkas, also under Carnegy, advanced north from Palel. We did not fire a shot till within a hundred yards, fearful of hitting own men. Then our party charged, but were brought up by a deep ditch under their walls; down we scrambled, and when a lot of our men had collected within ten paces of their walls, firing at every head that showed, the enemy put up a white flag, and I at once stopped the fire. Then they sprang up and fired at us. I felt a tremendous blow on the neck, and staggered and fell, luckily on the edge of the ditch, rather under cover; but feeling the wound with my finger, and being able to speak, and feeling no violent flow of blood, I discovered I wasn't dead just yet. So I reloaded my revolver and got up.

". . . I ran in, and found the enemy bolting at last from the east, and running away towards Manipur. . . .

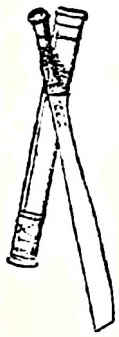
"As soon as the enemy got clear of the fort the shrapnel from the hills opened fire on them, and when they got beyond, then Cox cut in with his mounted infantry, and only five or six escaped; but poor Cox got badly shot by one of them through the shoulder, but is doing well.

"Carnegy and Grant, of the 2nd-4th, found twenty or thirty of the enemy in a deep hole in the corner of the fort, where they had escaped our men, and in settling them Carnegy got shot through the thigh, and Drury got his hand broke by the butt of a gun. Two of my men were wounded, and two of the 2nd-4th killed, and five or six wounded, I think because they were in much closer order than my men, who were at ten paces interval." (Actually nine of the 2/4th were wounded.)

"We gathered seventy-five bodies in the fort and fifty-six

The Whole Battalion. Manipur Expedition, 1891

The Whole Battalion. Manipur Expedition, 1891



near it, and the shrapnel and mounted infantry killed over one hundred. The Manipuris here say we killed over four hundred. So we paid off part of our score against their treachery. We spent the night there.

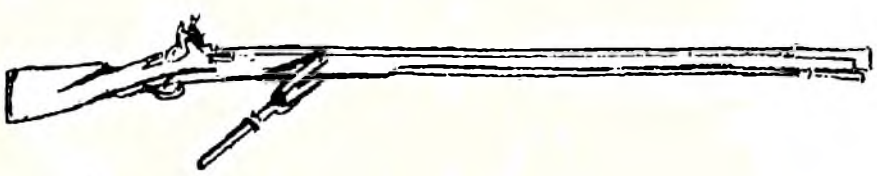
". . . Next morning we advanced to my fort at Thobal, and found it deserted; and the royal family and army fled from Manipur as soon as they heard of the action of the 25th. So yesterday, the 27th, we marched in here, my Thobal party, by order of the General, being the first to enter the palace on our side, the Cachar and Kohima columns arriving from the west and north just before them."

Captain F. M. Rundall was mentioned in despatches for his good work in this battle. Havildar Manbir Limbu was awarded the Indian Order of Merit for his gallantry in rescuing Captain Drury under heavy fire.

The Senapati and his friends had fled from the town of Manipur. They were pursued by military police and captured; the Senapati himself and those of his party concerned in the murder of Quinton and the other officers were executed. With the occupation of Manipur, therefore, the main expedition was considered to have achieved its object, and on the 29th April the Tamu Column marched southwards again.

On the departure of the column the following farewell order was issued by Brigadier-General J. Graham, C.B. :—

"The 2/4th Gurkhas being about to leave his command, the Brigadier-General wishes to record his high opinion of the valuable services of the Battalion during the time it has been under his orders. The Battalion, though a young one, reached Burmah in a high state of discipline; and the Brigadier-General notices with much satisfaction that,



The Whole Battalion. Manipur Expedition, 1891

although it has been split up into numerous detachments, and though the men have been exposed to much very rough work and great hardships inseparable from Field Service in the hills for the past eighteen months, the Battalion has maintained its smartness and military spirit without the slightest deterioration. This proves that the officers, native officers, N.C.O.'s and men have a proper feeling of *esprit de corps*, and are all imbued with a determination to maintain the well-earned high reputation of the Battalion. On Field Service the Battalion has always acquitted itself most admirably and has shown that its fighting qualities are all that could possibly be desired, and that the power of endurance shown by all ranks is second to none. The Brigadier-General will have the greatest pleasure in submitting to Army Headquarters a report on the state of the Battalion, which he considers to be highly satisfactory, and a credit to the British and Native Officers and all ranks.

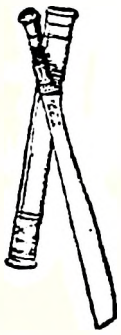
"The Brigadier-General very much regrets the number of casualties which have occurred and sincerely trusts that the wounded will soon recover.

"In bidding farewell to the 2/4th Gurkhas, the Brigadier-General hopes that, should he be lucky enough to again command a brigade in the field, he may have the good fortune to have this splendid Battalion with him."

The India Medal, with clasp "North-East Frontier, 1891," was granted to all troops who took part in the occupation of Manipur.

The Battalion left Manipur *en route* for Bakloh on the 5th May 1891. Unfortunately cholera broke out on the return journey and the Battalion lost many valuable men. It reached Kigwerna on the 11th May, and remained there in cholera camp till the 24th May. It then proceeded by Wings to Golaghat, where it arrived on the 1st June.

The Whole Battalion. Manipur Expedition, 1891



The Left Wing of the Battalion proceeded by route march, steamer, and rail, and arrived at Bakloh on the 21st June 1891. The Headquarters and Right Wing of the Battalion remained in cholera camp at Golaghat till the 23rd June, when it likewise proceeded to Bakloh, arriving there on the 10th July 1891.

CHAPTER V.

1ST BATTALION.

Second Miranzai Expedition, 1891-92

WHILE the newly formed 2nd Battalion was making its way through the wilds of Manipur, on the North-East Frontier, the 1st Battalion was setting out for service nearer home.

The whole of the North-West Frontier had been in rather a disturbed condition during 1890, the Orakzais having been especially troublesome with their repeated raids into the Miranzai Valley. The Orakzais are a Pathan tribe of wiry mountaineers, inhabiting the southern half of the Tirah west of Kohat and north of the Miranzai Valley. They are divided into two sects, Sunnis (like the great majority of Pathans) and Shias; for this reason the "House of Orakzai" is occasionally divided against itself. They are less formidable than their neighbours, the Afridis, but are more liable to fanaticism. Their country includes the valley of the Khanki River, and the mountains south of that river known as the Samana Range.

In January 1891 a force had left Kohat, traversed the Orakzai country, and established various posts on the Samana Range. This first expedition had no

Second Miranzai Expedition, 1891-92

lasting effect, however, and in April of the same year a second and much larger expedition was concentrated at Hangu and Darband. This force experienced some severe fighting during April and May, but eventually brought the Orakzais into complete submission. It was in connection with these operations that the 1/4th Gurkhas were sent to Kohat, and later found themselves doing garrison duty on the Samana Range.

On the 7th April 1891 telegraphic instructions were received from Army Headquarters ordering the Battalion to move as soon as possible to Rawal Pindi to relieve the 15th Sikhs, ordered to Kohat. Camel and mule transport were promptly supplied by the Commissariat Department, and the Battalion, consisting of 7 British officers, 13 Gurkha officers, and 734 rank and file, under the command of Major C. A. Mercer, left Bakloh on the evening of 8th April and arrived at Pathankot early on the morning of the 10th. It was at once entrained in two special troop trains, and arrived at Rawal Pindi on the morning of the 11th April. After three days at Rawal Pindi, Headquarters and the Right Wing were ordered to Kohat, and despatched by train on the 14th April to Khushalgarh with orders to move on to Kohat at once.

Heavy rain that night prevented marching until next morning, when the baggage was taken out of the train, loaded up on camels, and the troops moved off at about 7.30 A.M. They marched straight into Kohat, covering the thirty-two miles of road in about twelve hours, including halts; this was a very creditable performance considering the time of year and the fact that the men were marching on

empty stomachs, having had no proper meal since the morning of the previous day.

On the 16th April the Right Wing took over all the garrison guards and duties at Kohat, with the exception of those provided by the depots of the different units composing the garrison. One company marched that same evening towards the front, to take over the post of Chilibagh, eleven miles distant.

On the 27th April the Left Wing, under the command of Captain G. R. Brown, arrived from Rawal Pindi, having also performed the march from Khushalgarh to Kohat in one day, and this, too, in much hotter weather.

The duties at Kohat were extremely heavy, as, in addition to the company at Chilibagh, another company was ordered to Hangu on the 28th April. On the 7th May a third company was detached, and moved up to Baliamin, at the foot of the Samana Range; the detachment at Chilibagh was then relieved by one of similar strength from the 27th Punjab Infantry. The Battalion had, moreover, to furnish escorts for most of the convoys supplying the forward troops.

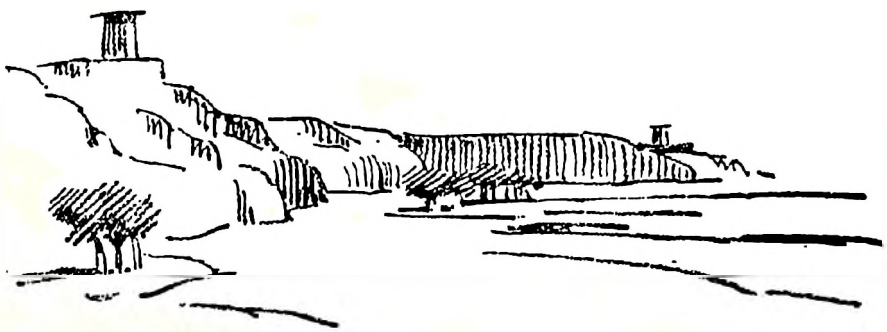
The Battalion was not fortunate enough to take an active part in any of the operations on the Samana Range during the Second Miranzai Expedition, although a small party of the Battalion accompanying a large convoy was attacked by the enemy near Darband on the 23rd April 1891. On this occasion No. 1928 Rifleman Tejbir Gurung distinguished himself by his gallantry, and was subsequently mentioned in despatches by Brigadier-General Sir William Lockhart, K.C.B.

Second Miranzai Expedition, 1891-92

At the conclusion of the operations against the Orakzai tribes, and on the return of the Expeditionary Force to Kohat, the Battalion was ordered to proceed to Samana Range. It marched from Kohat on the 11th June, and on the 13th arrived at Mastan (Fort Lockhart), the highest and most important post on the range. The force now occupying the range, at the various posts and outposts, consisted of the 15th Sikhs, 29th Punjab Infantry, 2nd Punjab Infantry, 1/4th Gurkhas, and No. 3 Peshawar Mountain Battery.

Owing to the extremely arduous duties they had been called upon to perform at Kohat and along the line of communications during the past two months the Battalion suffered in health considerably, and arrived at Mastan with fifty men sick (four more serious cases having been left at Kohat). The sudden change of climate, at a height of 6500 feet, after the extreme heat of Kohat, told very severely upon the men at first, and the numbers of sick increased daily until, on the 30th June, there were one hundred and twelve men in hospital. This high rate lasted only a short time, however, and the pure air and bracing climate of the hills soon brought down the sick list. It is worthy of note, nevertheless, that nineteen men succumbed to fever, diarrhœa, and dysentery within a period of five and a half months.

On arrival at Mastan the Battalion was concentrated there for two months. Between August and December, however, it was dispersed, providing detachments at Sangar and Dhar, east of Mastan, and at Gulistan and Shinawari, at the western end of the range.



Second Miranzai Expedition, 1891-92

Towards the end of December 1891 it was decided by the Punjab Government, on the advice of the military authorities, to leave only one Battalion actually on the range. The 15th Sikhs and 29th Punjab Infantry were withdrawn altogether and returned to their respective stations in the Punjab, the 2nd Punjab Infantry was concentrated at the foot of the range, and by the 24th December 1891 the whole of the Samana Range was garrisoned by the 1/4th Gurkhas.

The Battalion remained on the range, occupying the various posts throughout the winter. The surrounding tribes were quiet, and no hostile demonstrations of any kind took place. The health of the Battalion continued to improve, until there was scarcely a man left in hospital. The winter was a particularly mild one, considering the altitude, and the men were well clothed, housed, and fed.

On the 23rd March 1892 the Battalion was relieved by the 3rd Sikhs from Kohat, and left the Samana on the 24th. It marched to Khushalgarh, where it entrained for Pathankot, reaching Bakloh on the 3rd April 1892.

The India Medal, with clasp "Samana, 1891," was granted to all troops who took part in this operation.

Waziristan Expedition, 1894-95

Towards the end of 1894 there was more trouble on the North-West Frontier. This time the Mahsuds in Waziristan were the villains of the piece.

Waziristan, a country with which the Regiment was to have considerable acquaintance later in its history, divides the districts of Kurram and Zhob

Waziristan Expedition, 1894-95

on the Afghan frontier. A wild, inhospitable country, intersected by chains of mountains and ravines, it is inhabited by two main tribes—the Mahsuds, in the heart of Waziristan, and the Wazirs, hemming in the Mahsuds on the north, south, and east.

These tribes were at enmity with each other, and bred in an atmosphere of robbery and blood-feuds. Independent in spirit, they were active and hardy in body; good marksmen and redoubtable fighters, neither giving nor expecting quarter. Notorious as the most persistent raiders of the border, they eked out their existence by plundering their peaceful neighbours in the plains. Until roads began to be constructed in 1922, the ravines and watercourses, the beds of which were strewn with boulders and stones, formed the only natural means of communication in this difficult country. In many places the ravines narrowed to mere gorges called "Tangis."

In 1894, in accordance with a treaty negotiated with the Amir of Kabul by Sir Mortimer Durand, a British Boundary Commission was sent out to determine the Waziri-Afghan boundary from Domandi, on the Gomal River, to Laram, on the borders of Khost. This Commission was accompanied by an escort of nearly three thousand men.

The presence of a Boundary Commission can nearly always be relied upon to rouse the pugnacious instincts of a Pathan; this case was no exception. Stirred up by recent Afghan intrigues and organised by a professional trouble-maker known as the Mullah Powindah, the Mahsuds fell upon the British camp at Wana one November morning, and were only

beaten off after a very stiff fight. One British officer, Lieutenant Macaulay, R.E., and 44 other ranks and followers were killed, and 6 British officers and 69 other ranks and followers were wounded. The attack was the culmination of a long series of outrages, and a punitive expedition was obviously necessary.

During November and early December 1894 a force known as the "Waziristan Field Force" was organised, and placed under the command of Sir William Lockhart, K.C.B. The 1/4th Gurkhas formed part of this force.

On the 29th November 1894 the Battalion was ordered to Dera Ismail Khan for garrison duty, but on arrival at that place was at once selected by Sir William Lockhart for active service with the Field Force. The Battalion was at this time on relief scale with a strength of 7 British officers, 13 Gurkha officers, and 624 rank and file.

Leaving Dera Ismail Khan on the 6th December, the Battalion escorted a large convoy of stores to Tank, and by the 15th December, after a march of 120 miles, had arrived at Wana to complete the 1st Brigade of the Waziristan Field Force under Brigadier-General A. H. Turner. The composition of this brigade was as follows :—

One squadron 1st Punjab Cavalry.
No. 3 Punjab Mountain Battery.
No. 2 Company Bengal Sappers and Miners.
2nd Battalion the Border Regiment.
20th Punjab Infantry (garrisoned Wana during the operations).
3rd Sikh Infantry.
1/1st Gurkhas.
1/4th Gurkhas.

Waziristan Expedition, 1894-95

Operations then commenced. The three Brigades composing the Field Force were concentrated, one at Wana, the second at Jandola, and the third at Mirian, near Bannu ; the plan was that they should advance to Kaniguram, Makin, and Razmak respectively, thus traversing the heart of the Mahsud country.

On the 18th December 1894 the Battalion, as part of the 1st Brigade, left Wana for Kaniguram. It halted next day at Jumai Kot, while part of the Brigade destroyed houses at Torwam, and a strong reconnaissance under Lieutenant-Colonel C. A. Mercer was made of the difficult route over the Sherawangi Narai (Pass). On the 20th, after a most trying and difficult march over the Sherawangi Narai, the Brigade reached Camp Mogul Kot. The rear-guard, consisting of two hundred men of the 1/4th Gurkhas, had a slight brush with the enemy on the Narai, and the difficulties of the route for the baggage animals were so great that the rear-guard did not arrive in camp till after 1 A.M. On the 21st the Brigade arrived at Kaniguram.

On the 22nd a force of 2 guns and 600 rifles, including 200 rifles of the Battalion, was sent out up the Murdar Algad, under Lieutenant-Colonel Mercer, to punish a well-known local character named Sinaband Garrarai. With the aid of a half company of sappers and miners several village towers were blown up, and a large quantity of grain and forage was seized and taken back to camp. The enemy caused a few casualties among the sappers and miners, but they were dispersed by shell-fire, and the British force reached Kaniguram safely at 8 P.M. the same day.

On Christmas Day the Battalion formed part of one of the six flying columns sent out into the valleys

north-west of Kaniguram to punish the tribes for their part in the Wana affair. Many towers and settlements were destroyed, and large quantities of grain and over a thousand head of cattle were carried off.

On the 2nd January 1895 the Brigade left Kaniguram and marched down the Shinkai Valley about fifteen miles south-east to Ahmadwam. The next day a column of 2 guns and 600 rifles, including 200 rifles of the Battalion, was sent out under Lieutenant-Colonel Mercer to visit the Abdur Rahman villages in the valley of the Spli Toi River, south of Ahmadwam, and to destroy all defences there. Instructions were fully carried out, and the column returned to Ahmadwam on the 5th January, having met with little opposition.

On the 6th January the Brigade marched south-east to Bahadur Khel, whence, after destroying some hamlets, it proceeded *via* the Takki Zam River to Jandola, arriving on the 9th. It thus completed a full circle of marching.

From the 9th to the 12th January all three brigades of the field force were concentrated at Jandola under Sir William Lockhart. During this time the Battalion received from Bakloh a reinforcement of 1 British officer (Lieutenant Brodhurst) and 117 Gurkha other ranks.

On the 12th January all three brigades left Jandola, the 1st Brigade returning to Wana, where it arrived without incident on the 19th.

It was now decided that the work of boundary delimitation, which had been so suddenly cut short by the Wana attack in November, should be continued. Accordingly, Mr L. White King, Deputy Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan, accompanied by a survey party and a strong escort, left Wana for Domandi on the

Waziristan Expedition, 1894-95

24th January, and four days later commenced his work. The escort, which was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel W. O. Thompson, 3rd Sikhs, included 6 British officers and 457 men of the Battalion.

Mr White King successfully demarcated the boundary as far as Khwaja Khidr, some sixty miles north from Domandi, and returned to Wana on the 14th February.

During the rest of February and the early part of March the Battalion remained at Wana, engaged on the construction of a fortified post there.

Early in March the last stage of the delimitation work was taken in hand. Since all the Mahsuds concerned in the attack on Wana had been punished and had made their submission, and the Mullah Powindah had left the country, it was felt that the situation had been satisfactorily dealt with, and Sir William Lockhart began to withdraw his troops from Waziristan.

On the 11th March the 1/4th Gurkhas commenced their return to India. Marching *via* Jandola and Dera Ismail Khan, the Battalion entrained at Darya Khan, and eventually arrived back at Bakloh on the 28th March 1895.

The India Medal, with clasp "Waziristan, 1894-95," was granted to all troops who took part in these operations, and the Regiment earned the Battle Honour "Waziristan, 1895."

CHAPTER VI.

2ND BATTALION.

Chitral, 1895

IN January 1895, while the 1st Battalion was operating against the Mahsuds in Waziristan, trouble was brewing some three hundred miles farther north-east in Chitral.

Nestling amidst the snowy ranges of the Hindu Kush, the small state of Chitral had until recent years been practically inaccessible to the British. The Chitralis are Aryans, however, and in 1878, influenced by dread of his Pathan neighbour in Afghanistan, the Mehtar of Chitral, Aman-ul-Mulk, had placed his country under the suzerainty of Kashmir, a tributary state of the British Empire. This had brought him into touch with the British, and in 1893 a British political officer was installed in Chitral under the Political Agency at Gilgit.

On New Year's Day, 1895, the Mehtar, son of Aman-ul-Mulk, was treacherously murdered by the servant of his half-brother, Amir-ul-Mulk. Amir-ul-Mulk at once sped to Chitral, the capital of the state, and demanded with threats that the British political officer there should pledge official recognition of his accession. The political officer, Lieutenant Gurdon by name, very properly said that he could promise

Chitral, 1895

nothing, whereupon he was for some days in grave danger of his life. Eventually, however, he was joined by a detachment of fifty Sikhs, and later by Surgeon-Major Robertson, the British Resident for Gilgit, with over three hundred and fifty men of the 14th Sikhs and 4th Kashmir Rifles.

Amir-ul-Mulk was a man of weak intellect, and it is probable that the murder of his half-brother was carried out at the instigation of a neighbouring tribal leader called Umra Khan. At any rate Umra Khan left the province of Jandol and advanced north into Chitral with an army of some three thousand with the object of seizing power. Robertson and Gurdon at once took possession of the fort of Chitral. After a gallant action of the 3rd March, in which it sustained fifty-five casualties, their small force found itself besieged within the fort by Umra Khan and his army, together with a large number of hostile tribesmen led by Sher Afzul, another claimant to the *gaddi* of the Mehtar.

Their position was precarious. The fort was of the ordinary local type, with mud walls twenty-five feet high, and commanded by hills on three sides. Supplies carefully rationed were sufficient for only ten weeks, and ammunition averaged less than three hundred rounds per rifle. Steps for the relief of the fort had to be taken at once.

A force of fifteen thousand men, known as the Chitral Relief Force, was concentrated at Nowshera and Hoti Mardan, under Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Low, K.C.B.; it was to advance north *via* the Malakand Pass and through Swat, Bajaur, and Dir. At the same time Colonel Kelly, commanding

Chitral, 1895

the 32nd Pioneers in the Gilgit Agency, was instructed to act as he thought best, with the proviso that he was not to undertake operations "which did not offer a reasonable chance of success."

The 2/4th Gurkhas were ordered to form part of the Chitral Relief Force, and the Battalion left Bakloh on the 20th March 1895. The Relief Force consisted of three infantry brigades, of which the 3rd Brigade, under the command of Brigadier-General W. F. Gatacre, D.S.O., was made up as follows :—

1st Battalion East Kent Regiment.
2nd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders.
25th Punjab Infantry.
2/4th Gurkhas.

Before the Relief Force marched it received the following inspiring message from the Commander-in-Chief :—

"I can best describe the importance and sanctity of the Mission on which the country now sends you forth by quoting the words of His Excellency the Viceroy. . . . His Excellency said : 'For the present we have before us a single issue, the claim of brave men, British and Indian, who have not flinched in the performance of their duty, to the support of their countrymen in their hour of need. It is a claim that I believe will go straight home to every British and Indian heart . . . and will quicken the step of every man whose duty calls him forth on this expedition.'"

On the 1st April 1895, Low marched north from Nowshera, and the following morning all his brigades were concentrated near Dargai, at the foot of the Malakand Pass. It was then discovered that the Malakand Pass was strongly held ; this was contrary

DIR FORT

Chitral, 1895

to previous reports, which had indicated that of the three passes into Swat only two, the Shahkot and Morah Passes, were strongly held.

Swat, the tribal territory comprising the valley of the river of that name, had always been a forbidden land to Europeans. The people of Swat combine a spirit of collective fanaticism, which is easily roused, with a jealous dread of outside interference, and for long it had been their proud boast that their *purdah* or curtain had never been lifted. One or two British secret agents had penetrated into the Swat country in disguise, but always in great danger of their lives and therefore hurriedly. The country was still virtually unknown.

When, in March, a British expedition to Chitral had become inevitable, the Government of India had issued a proclamation to the peoples of Swat and Bajaur emphasising that our quarrel was with Umra Khan, and that, provided we were given free passage, we would not interfere with the tribes through whose lands we should pass. Characteristically the Swatis had taken little notice of this promise, and now, armed with few weapons but robed in the white garments of their faith, they were determined to bar the passage of the first British force ever to threaten their cherished seclusion.

KAFIR TRADER

At 8 A.M. on the 3rd April, Low moved his 2nd Brigade forward from Dargai for the attack on the Malakand Pass, the top of which was five miles to the north. His plan was to force the pass with the 2nd Brigade and to exploit to the Swat River with the 1st Brigade, the 3rd Brigade being held in reserve at

Chitral, 1895

Dargai. As the British force made its way slowly upwards the strength and dispositions of the enemy were revealed. It was seen that the slopes and hills to the west of the pass were strongly held by means of numerous sangars, but that to the east of the pass the earlier slopes and hills were not held.

The 4th Sikhs and the Guides Infantry commenced the attack. Then regiment after regiment of the 2nd Brigade (to which the 2/4th were temporarily attached) was sent forward to assault the western slopes, and soon the whole of the 2nd Brigade and part of the 1st Brigade were fighting their way upwards under the covering fire of maxim guns, while from the eastern slopes no less than sixteen guns were firing in support.

The enemy, who numbered some twelve thousand, fought with desperate bravery, those who were without firearms hurling down rocks and boulders on to the heads of the attackers. Sangar after sangar was held to the very last. Modern weapons and the splendid fighting of Low's troops were irresistible, and gradually, fighting grimly all the way, the enemy were driven back up the slopes at the point of the bayonet, and by 2 P.M. had been cleared from the hills commanding the pass. A pursuit was carried out as far as Khar, three miles north of the pass. The enemy's losses were said to be about 500 dead and wounded, while the British losses were 11 killed and 51 wounded.

It was interesting to find afterwards that the enemy had provided their sangars with lateral firing slits, giving excellent command of the path through the

Chitral, 1895

pass, and that if the British troops had been simple enough to make use of this path they would have suffered badly. The enemy, on the other hand, had not expected a frontal attack such as was made, and had not cut the necessary vertical firing slits to meet it.

After the capture of the pass there was at first a good deal of difficulty in getting the transport mules up, because of the primitive state of the track. This was soon remedied, however, owing to a very curious discovery. "In the report of the officer commanding the King's Royal Rifle Corps on this day's action, he states that after going half-way up the hill he came upon 'an old pathway.' On examination this turned out to be an old Buddhist road, disused for hundreds of years, but so well made originally that it took our engineers and sappers but two days to make it into a camel road from near Dargai, at the mouth of the Pass, to the top." (Extract from despatch by General Low.)

On the 4th April the last Brigade moved down from the pass into the Swat country, occupying Khar after overcoming strong opposition in which six hundred tribesmen were killed. The Swatis suffered a further severe defeat on the 7th when the Swat River was crossed at Chakdara. Thereafter the conduct of Swat, in spite of repeated efforts to stir up fanaticism, remained peaceful. The 2/4th Gurkhas took no part in these actions, as the 3rd Brigade did not reach Khar until the 8th, having been employed on improvement of the route over the Malakand Pass for the camels.

Chitral, 1895

The 1st Brigade was now left to guard the Swat Valley, the remainder of the Relief Force resuming its advance on the 9th with the 2nd Brigade leading. On the 12th the Panjkora was made passable by a footbridge near Sado, a bridge-head being formed by the Guides Infantry, which had a sharp action on the 13th and 14th.

On the 17th April the 3rd Brigade crossed the Panjkora River, over which a suspension bridge had been constructed, and advanced up the Jandol Valley in the territory of Bajaur. A large body of tribesmen, numbering between three thousand and four thousand, was found to be occupying the hills to the south of the valley, holding several villages and the spurs around them. The 2/4th Gurkhas and the Seaforth Highlanders advanced from Ghobani to attack them under artillery support. Both battalions were eager to get to grips with the enemy at last, and their advance proved irresistible. The tribesmen, in spite of their superior numbers, were in no mood for a fight, and they were driven back from ridge to ridge until the valley was finally cleared at a cost of only eight British casualties. This successful action had a marked effect upon the morale of the tribesmen and put an end to opposition to the British advance.

The next day the 3rd Brigade advanced westward to Mundah, the home of Umra Khan. The fort there was found to be deserted, and Umra Khan was reported to have fled to Afghanistan. There was no news of the beleaguered garrison at Chitral, however, and Low decided to send forward a strong flying column under Gatacre to see what

KHAN OF DIR'S ARMY

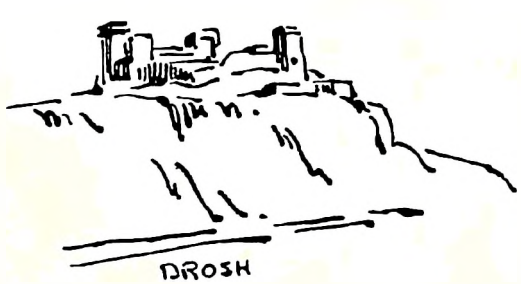
had happened. This column was made up as follows :—

No. 2 Derajat Mountain Battery.
Half No. 4 Company Bengal Sappers and Miners.
1st Battalion the Buffs.
2/4th Gurkhas.
Two maxim guns, Devonshire Regiment.

It took seventeen days' supplies and was to push forward to Chitral with all speed *via* the Janbatai and Lowari Passes.

Gatacre left the Jandol Valley and crossed the Janbatai Pass on the 19th April. The pass presented no great difficulties, for the road, though climbing steeply up desolate boulder-strewn slopes, was fairly good. From the summit there was a magnificent view; southward over the rolling and somewhat treeless country of Jandol, and northward over the fertile leafy valleys of Dir to where another great range gave promise of fresh climbing. Dir itself was just a fort on a hillside.

On the 21st April Gatacre received the news that the siege of Chitral had been raised. Colonel Kelly (whose Staff Officer was Lieutenant W. G. L. Beynon, who had served with the 4th Gurkhas and who later became Major-General Sir W. G. L. Beynon, K.C.I.E.) had made a splendid march with only four hundred men of the 32nd Pioneers and a section of No. 1 Kashmir Battery over the two hundred and twenty miles of mountainous country between Gilgit and Chitral. After man-handling his guns over the snow-bound Shandur Pass, he had fought two stiff actions and arrived at Chitral on the 20th April (the forty-sixth day of the siege) to find that Umra Khan had



fled at his approach. There was, therefore, no great need for haste, so Gatacre continued his advance at a more comfortable rate, improving the road as he went. He was moving through unknown country, and every bit of the way must have been of interest.

The difficulties which had to be overcome by Gatacre's force can best be described by the following quotations :—

" The route to Gujar, at the foot of the Lowari Pass, lay for eleven miles up the Dir Valley beside the tumbling, snow-fed torrent that streams from the south side of the pass. The track was in general extremely difficult, frequently losing itself among the boulders that choked the bed of the stream, or rising steeply to traverse the face of a rocky bluff, only to fall again with equal abruptness on the farther side. This portion of the road had to be realigned and reconstructed throughout, the river had to be bridged in some four or five places, and stone staircase ramps had to be built in the water at more than one point, to enable laden animals to pass where the stream washed the foot of precipitous cliffs.

" From Gujar, 8450 feet, to the summit of the pass, 10,250 feet, a distance of three miles, the track lay over frozen but often treacherous snow, at first at a fairly easy gradient, but growing steeper and more slippery as the pass was approached. Beyond the crest a great snow cornice, fifteen feet in height, overhung the head of the glen, down which the track descended for about a thousand yards at a gradient of one in three or four, over vast drifts of avalanche snow, in which great rocks and the uprooted trunks of gigantic trees lay deeply imbedded. From the foot of this descent the route lay down a steep and rocky gorge, now following the tangled bed of the torrent, now winding through fine forests of pine and cedar, or traversing open grassy slopes clogged with the drainage of melting snows.

" About three miles from the pass there is a camping ground called Ziarat, situated high above the torrent at

Chitral, 1895

an elevation of 7200 feet and surrounded by a forest of pine trees. Onwards from Ziarat to Ashreth, a distance of about six miles, the character of the valley remains the same. Throughout its entire length of twenty-three miles, from Dir to Ashreth, the road was a mere goat track, offering extraordinary difficulties to the passage of troops, and requiring extensive improvements before laden animals could follow it." (' Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,' vol. i.)

Where the track slid down through the snow the men of Gatacre's force were compelled to do likewise.

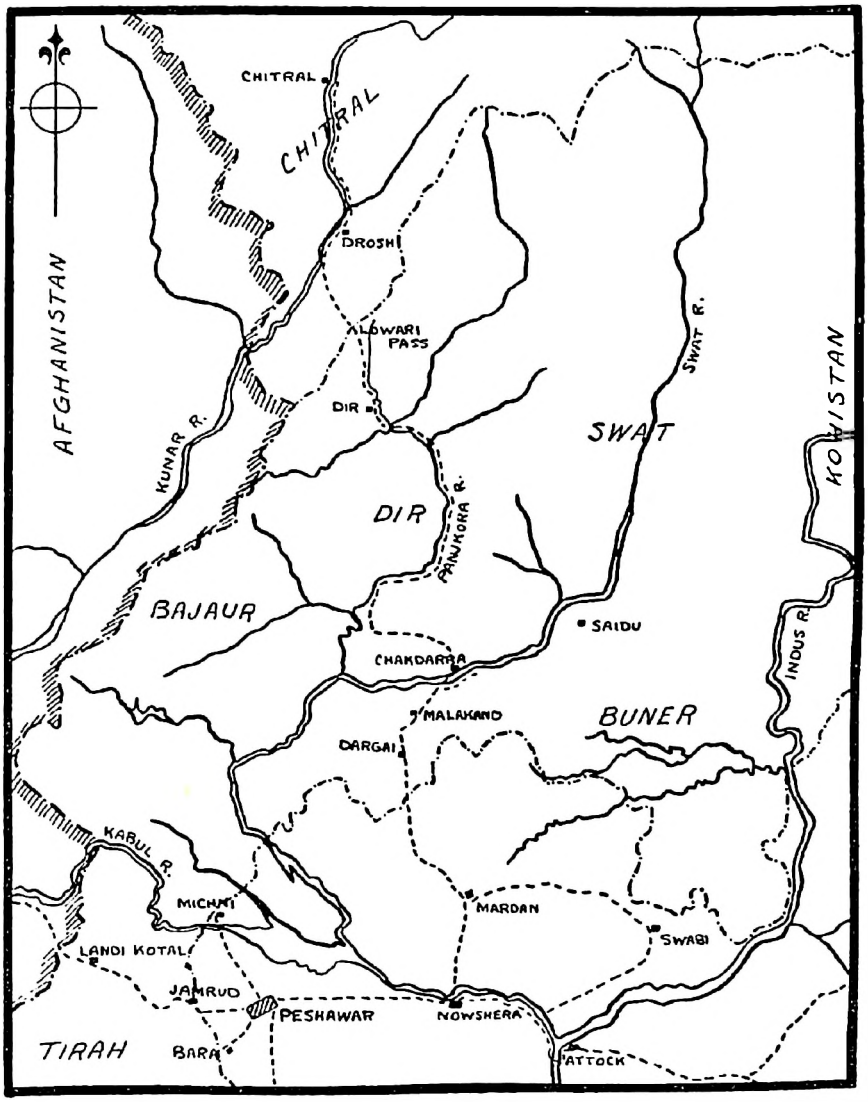
" There was a steep glissade of more than a thousand feet, down which both men and mules slipped as best they could. One of the officers had a curious escape from being badly hurt. He was tobogganing quietly down when he happened to glance back over his shoulder and saw a mule immediately behind him, coming down with such velocity that he had only just time to throw himself on one side before it shot over the place where he had been the moment before." (' The Chitral Campaign,' by H. C. Thomson.)

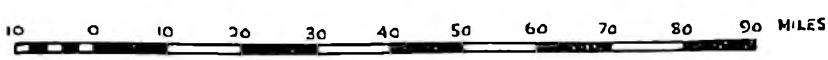
In spite of the cold and rain, the absence of tents, and a hard scale of only 10 lb. of kit per man, there were only five men on the sick list when Ashreth was reached. Indeed a record to be proud of !

Having conveyed some idea of the nature of the country through which Gatacre made his advance to Ashreth, it is now necessary to chronicle the actual progress of that advance.

Leaving his guns behind, Gatacre left Dir on the 23rd April with ten days' supplies. Gujar was reached on the 25th, and at 3.30 A.M. on the 26th an advanced column, consisting of the Sappers, four companies of the Buffs, one company of the

CHITRAL TO PESHAWAR





Chitral, 1895

2/4th Gurkhas, two hundred coolies carrying light loads, and mules carrying equipment and baggage, tackled the Lowari Pass. The track leading up the pass had already been cleared to some extent by the rest of the column on the previous day, and, in spite of its extreme difficulties, the ascent was completed by 7 A.M.

The company of the 2/4th Gurkhas was responsible for the mules, while the Buffs tramped down the snow and lined the track, which the sappers improved, to assist at the most dangerous places.

The descent was more difficult. Many mules fell, though none were injured, and it was not until nightfall that Ziarat was reached. Many of the Buffs were obliged to bivouac along the road that night.

On the 27th the remainder of the column crossed the pass, and the next two days were spent improving the descent from the pass on the north side. On the 30th the whole column, except for two companies of the 2/4th Gurkhas left at Ziarat, concentrated at Ashreth.

After a few days' halt the following flying column under Gatacre was pushed on to Chitral to reinforce Kelly's troops there :—

No. 2 Derajat Mountain Battery.
No. 4 Company Bengal Sappers and Miners.
1st Battalion the Buffs.
One Company 2/4th Gurkhas.

This column reached Chitral on the 15th May. The remainder of the 2/4th Gurkhas held the line of communications from Ziarat to within a few miles of Chitral.

Chitral, 1895

The primary objects of the expedition had now been achieved. Chitral had been relieved, Umra Khan had fled, two British officers (Lieutenant S. M. Edwardes, 2nd Bombay Grenadiers, and Lieutenant J. S. Fowler, R.E.), who had been captured by Umra Khan, had been returned after receiving courteous treatment, and both Amir-ul-Mulk and Sher Afzul were prisoners of war. The British choice for the position of Mehtar of Chitral had fallen on the only other claimant, Shuja-ul-Mulk, a very promising lad of twelve, and in his interests both his rivals were taken down to India by British troops. Shuja-ul-Mulk died in 1936, after a reign of over forty years.

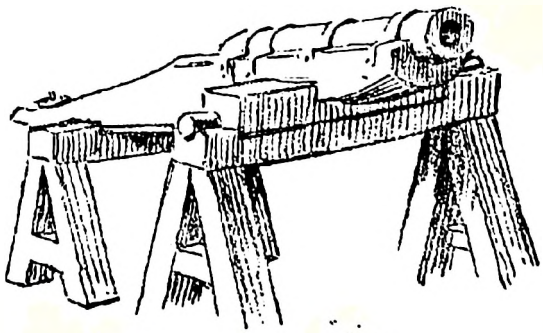
The following gracious message from Her Majesty the Queen Empress was forwarded by the Viceroy to Sir Robert Low :—

" Pray convey to my brave troops my admiration of their gallantry and endurance, my sorrow for the loss of valuable lives, and my anxiety for the recovery of the wounded and sick."

About the middle of September, after several months spent quietly in improving roads and bridging the Swat at Chakdara, and the Panjkora, the withdrawal of the force was ordered, and the final evacuation was completed on the 27th September 1895.

The Battalion arrived back at Bakloh on the 8th October 1895.

The following is an extract from the diary of Brigadier-General Gatacre, D.S.O., commanding the 3rd Brigade of the Chitral Relief Force :—



Chitral, 1895

"I relinquish the 2/4th Gurkhas, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir C. Leslie, with genuine regret; during the operations of the Chitral Relief Force this Regiment has constantly been under my observation, and I am satisfied that no more efficient or generally useful lot of officers and men could be sent on service. I hope to serve with them again."

The India Medal, 1895, with clasp "Chitral," was granted to all troops who took part in this campaign. For the part which the Battalion had taken the Regiment was awarded the Battle Honour "Chitral."

From April 1897, two years after the Chitral Campaign, the 1st Battalion was in Chitral on garrison duty for a year. The country was quite peaceful during this period. The Battalion eventually arrived back at Bakloh on the 5th June 1898.

Tirah, 1897-98

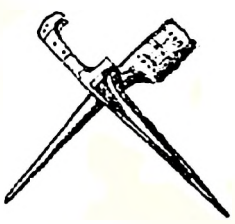
On the return of the Chitral Expedition the frontier settled down into its customary state of somewhat uneasy tranquillity. The annual relief of the newly established Chitral garrison was carried out *via* Swat without any trouble, and elsewhere all seemed calm. It was the calm before the storm, however, for beneath the surface was brewing the most serious upheaval that the frontier has ever known—an upheaval that was to result in the complete change of status of the frontier territories.

At this point, perhaps, it is worth while to picture very briefly what had been the past history and what was then the nature of the country in which the Regiment has so often served and fought.

The territories which now constitute the North-West Frontier Province were originally claimed as Afghan possessions, for as early as the fifteenth

century the wild Pathan tribes of Eastern Afghanistan swept down from their mountains and began to settle in the plains west of the Indus. There, however, cut off from their parent country by the mountains from which they had descended, these tribes were subject to little control from Kabul, and the opening of the nineteenth century found them under their local chiefs or loosely administered by Afghan Sirdars. When, about 1818, the Sikhs began to spread westward from the Punjab, the Peshawar Valley, together with many of the fertile lands west of the Indus, came under Sikh domination. It thus came about that when the British annexed the Punjab at the close of the 2nd Sikh War (1849), they also took over Peshawar and these lands, and the frontier tribes were thenceforward administered partly by the Punjab Government under the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, and partly by the Government of India direct.

Tirah, 1897-98



The tribes were, of course, extremely unruly, and from 1849 onwards they were the object of innumerable military expeditions. Moreover, they took full advantage of the lack of any definite frontier between British and Afghan territory, and when pursued after raiding and looting in British India they would retire into the mountains and claim the moral and material support of the Amir of Afghanistan. The situation was obviously unsatisfactory.

In 1879, during the second Afghan War, the Kurram Valley, and the Khyber Pass as far as Landi Khana, were ceded to the British, but still no attempt was made to define the frontier elsewhere. In 1893,

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therefore, Mr (later Sir) Mortimer Durand was sent to Kabul, and concluded a treaty with the Amir for the demarcation of the frontier, in which it was settled that British territory should include Waziristan in the south and a large part of the Mohmand country in the north. The work of demarcation was to be carried out by two British boundary commissions, one in the south and one in the north.

As we have seen in a previous chapter, the presence of the southern Boundary Commission in Waziristan led to the rising of the Mahsuds, but the commission eventually completed its work successfully. The northern commission hung fire for a time owing to local Afghan opposition, but in time the work went ahead. Thus, by the year 1897, the frontier was, theoretically at any rate, much the same as it is to-day.

For defence and the maintenance of order the British had established the following forts and posts:—A garrison in Chitral; a post at Malakand and an outpost at Chakdara, guarding the Swat country and the road to Chitral; three forts, including that of Shabkadhr, north of the Khyber, and guarding the Mohmand country; Jamrud, guarding the Khyber itself; Kohat and its outposts at Hangu and Thal, guarding the mountainous country of the Tirah and the road to the

Kurram Valley; Fort Lockhart and various small posts on the Samana Range, the southern fringe of the Tirah country; and, lastly, posts in the Tochi Valley, and at Wana and elsewhere, guarding the country of the Mahsuds and Wazirs. Peshawar was the civil and military headquarters of the frontier.

The posts named above were garrisoned by troops of the Punjab Frontier Force or by the Border Military Police. On the other hand, the road to Chitral, the Kurram Valley, and the Khyber Pass itself were protected by tribal levies. In the case of the Khyber Pass, this was of some importance in view of what happened later. The Khyber levies had been raised in 1881 as a result of an agreement with the Afridis, and during the following sixteen years they had grown into the corps of Khyber Rifles, some thousand strong. In 1897, officered by the British and paid for by the Government, this corps supplied the garrisons for the forts in the pass, namely, Fort Maude, Ali Masjid, and Landi Kotal.

Such, briefly, was the geographical and military situation on the frontier at the opening of the year 1897.

Politically there was a good deal of unrest. The Amir of Afghanistan was suspicious of our motives in the Durand agreement; the tribal mullahs of the frontier were perturbed by the establishment of law and order and their own consequent loss of power; the frontier tribes themselves were uneasy over the penetration into Chitral and the recent presence in their countries of the boundary com-

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missions. The tide of religious fanaticism began to rise. The mullahs preached a Jehad to the tribes, holding up the recent victory of the Turks over the Greeks as a victory of Islam over the infidel.

It was not long before serious trouble started. In June 1897 a treacherous attack was made on a British political officer in the Tochi Valley. Towards the end of July the people of Swat, worked up to a frenzy of excitement by a certain "mad fakir" who claimed the direct support of the heavenly hosts, rose in their thousands and assailed the Malakand Fort and its outpost of Chakdara. Early in August the Mohmands rose, and, led by the Hadda Mullah, attacked the fort of Shabkadhr and burned the bazar close by. The Government took prompt action, and strong forces were sent into the Tochi, over the Malakand Pass, and into the Mohmand country, but the whole frontier was ablaze, and the trouble soon spread to the country of the Afridis and Orakzais.

The Afridis and Orakzais inhabit a very mountainous district to the south-west of the Khyber. This is bounded by the Safed Koh Range on the north, by the Khyber Pass on the north-east, by the Peshawar-Kohat road on the east, by the Miranzai Valley on the south, and by the Kurram Valley on the west. The heart of this country is the Tirah, a name loosely used to denote the whole country defined above. (In the following narrative the name Tirah will be used in its more exact sense.)

The Afridis are fine specimens, hardy, brave, and well armed; they are, however, treacherous and ruthless, and very fanatical. They are considered

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by many to be the most redoubtable fighters on the frontier. At the time of which we are writing their lashkars contained many men who had served in the Indian Army. They inhabit the lower spurs of the Safed Koh Range, to the west and south of the Khyber, including the Bazar and Bara Valleys. In the winter they come down in large numbers to graze their cattle in the Khajuri Plain, but in the hot weather they retire to the heights of the Tirah, and there, principally in the Maidan Valley, they find summer pasturage for their flocks and herds.

The Orakzais (see Chapter V.) occupy part of the Tirah itself and most of the country between the Tirah on the north and the Samana Range on the south. It was to prevent their raids into the Miranzai Valley that Fort Lockhart and the other posts on the Samana Range had been established.

The Afridis and Orakzais together mustered some fifty-five thousand fighting men, and would thus have presented a formidable array if they could have been persuaded to act together. In this case the usual trouble-making mullah, one Saiyid Akbar, did his best to bring about a combination, but fortunately he was only partly successful.

The Afridis moved first. On the 23rd August 1897 they poured down into the Khyber ten thousand strong, and within a few hours had captured and burned Ali Masjid and Fort Maude. The Khyber Rifles garrisoning these posts escaped to Jamrud. The following day Landi Kotal was attacked. The garrison of 5 native officers and 370 men of the Khyber Rifles defended the position staunchly for a day. There must have been many of them who

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recognised brothers and cousins in the attacking force, however, and on the second day, the 25th August, the gates were opened from within. Landi Kotal was captured and burned, and more than fifty thousand rounds of ammunition fell into enemy hands. Of the garrison many remained loyal and fought their way out, 134 rejoining at Jamrud with their rifles in September, but the bulk of the remainder either went over to the enemy and joined in the looting or else fled to their homes.

The Afridis had now shot their bolt. For some reason they suddenly grew tired of aggression, and, deaf to the exhortations of their mullahs, they returned to their homes. They took little part in the subsequent fighting farther south. The Orakzais, on the other hand, having missed a splendid opportunity for a combined assault on British power, were only just starting to give trouble. It was not until the 26th August that they descended into the country above Kohat and captured the Ublan Pass. By that time the garrison at Kohat had been heavily reinforced from Rawal Pindi and elsewhere, and Hangu had been reinforced from Kohat. On the 27th the Ublan Pass was recaptured by a strong British force. On the same day the posts on the Samana Range were attacked by the tribes, but were successfully relieved by troops from Hangu.

During the last days of August and the beginning of September the situation was threatening. The tribal lashkars were massed in the hills, and various attacks were made on British posts in the Kurram and elsewhere. These attacks were successfully repulsed.

On the 12th September there occurred, on the Samana Range, the tragedy for which the rising is best remembered. The two chief posts on the eastern part of the Samana Range are Fort Lockhart and Fort Gulistan. These two forts were not within sight of each other, and, partly to maintain communication, a third post had been established between them in such a position that it was in sight of both. This post was known as Saraghari. On the 12th September all three posts were surrounded by huge numbers of hostile Orakzais, joined now by a lashkar of Afridis. Saraghari, garrisoned by twenty-one men of the 36th Sikhs, found itself assailed by many thousands of fanatical tribesmen. The gallant Sikhs put up one of the most heroic defences in the history of the frontier. They held their little fort for seven and a half hours, and when eventually the walls were undermined and the door was broken in they died fighting to the last. One Sikh held the guard-room single-handed when the mob poured in. He killed twenty of the enemy without being hurt himself, and then, rather than give in, perished in the flames when the room was set on fire. Not a soldier came out of Saraghari alive.

Fort Gulistan, in which were English women and children, was attacked at the same time as Saraghari. The garrison, 165 rifles of the 36th Sikhs, put up a magnificent defence for three days, until they were relieved.

Shortly after this the tribesmen began to disperse. The Afridi lashkar returned to its own country, and the Orakzais abandoned the Samana Range and fled northward. Both tribes may well have felt

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apprehensive of what might lie in store for them, for even then a strong punitive expedition was being collected to punish them for their misdeeds. It is to the operations of this expedition, the Tirah Field Force (of which the 2/4th Gurkhas formed a part), that we must now turn.

Early in September the Government had realised the necessity for large-scale punitive operations against the Afridis and Orakzais, and by the beginning of October the concentration of a powerful force was in full swing. The main column of this force consisted of two Divisions: the 1st Division, containing the 1st and 2nd Brigades, was commanded by Brigadier-General W. P. Symons, C.B., who had commanded the Southern Column in the Chin Lushai Expedition; the 2nd Division contained the 3rd and 4th Brigades. The 2nd Brigade, under the command of Brigadier-General A. Gaselee, C.B., A.D.C., was made up as follows:—

2nd Yorkshire Regiment.
1st Royal West Surrey Regiment (The Queen's).
3rd Sikh Infantry (Punjab Frontier Force).
2/4th Gurkhas.

In addition to the main column, three subsidiary columns were formed, one to operate from Peshawar, one to operate from the Kurram Valley, and the third to stand in reserve at Rawal Pindi. The whole force, which has been described as "The flower of our army in India," was commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir William Lockhart, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., under whom the Regiment had already served twice, the 2nd Battalion in the Second Miranzai

Expedition of 1891, and the 1st Battalion in the Waziristan Field Force of 1895.

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The general scheme of operations was that the main column should cross the Samana Range, penetrate to Tirah *via* the Sampagha and Arhanga Passes, and then co-operate with the subsidiary columns from Peshawar and the Kurram Valley.

By the beginning of October the concentration was in full swing, and about the middle of October the four brigades of the main column moved out from Kohat to Shinawari at the foot of the Samana Range.

Meanwhile the Mullah Saiyid Akbar was rallying his forces for defence. Some of the Afridis were to hold the Khyber Pass and the Bara Valley, and the remainder of the Afridis were to combine with the Orakzais in opposing the main British advance from the Samana Range to the Tirah.

The road north from Shinawari over the Samana Range is dominated by a very steep spur known as the Dargai Ridge. On the 18th October Sir William Lockhart commenced his operations with the capture of this ridge. The terrain was such that the attack had to be delivered up a steep slope, mostly under the full fire of the enemy on the ridge, and the final assault had to be made in single file up a narrow and precipitous path which led over the crest of the ridge.

Though the Dargai Ridge was successfully captured on the 18th October, it was unfortunately found impossible to hold it that night, owing to lack of supplies, and the position had to be recaptured two days later. The second capture of Dargai involved

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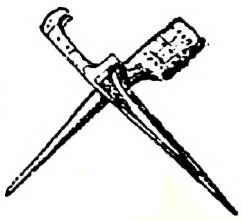
one of the severest actions of the whole campaign. The upward slope already mentioned was under a murderous fire from above, and it seemed as if no one could get across it and live. The 1/2nd Gurkhas and the Gurkha Scouts led the way, losing more than fifty men in a few seconds, and later, when joined by the Gordon Highlanders, they successfully assaulted up the narrow path. In these charges the 1/2nd Gurkhas (as also the other units) were magnificently led by their officers, of whom one was Captain D. C. F. Macintyre, nephew of the Macintyre who raised the 4th Gurkhas and himself later to command the 1st Battalion. The 1st Division was not engaged in these two actions.

Immediately after the second capture of the Dargai Ridge, Sir William Lockhart moved his force over the Samana Range down to Kharappa on the Khanki River, and thence, on the 28th October, out towards the Sampagha Pass.

The Sampagha Pass was found to be strongly held by the tribesmen. The road up the pass itself had been fortified by a large sangar, while sangars had likewise been constructed on the spurs to the right and left of the pass in order to protect the flanks of the position. Lockhart decided to launch a frontal attack straight up the pass, the 1st Division leading. The Division left Ghandaki Camp at 5 A.M. on the 29th October. By 7.30 A.M. the 1st Brigade had secured the foothills and the 2nd Brigade passed through under the concentrated fire of the Divisional artillery. The summit of the pass was occupied by the Queen's Regiment with little loss, but the enemy still held on obstinately to their sangars on ridges



to the north-east and north-west which commanded the pass. These sangars were gallantly stormed by the Queen's, 3rd Sikhs, 2/4th Gurkhas, and two Battalions of the 4th Brigade. By 11.30 A.M. the pass was in British hands, and the enemy were fleeing northwards across the Mastura River towards the Arhanga Pass, some six or seven miles away.

A telegram was sent later by Her Majesty the Queen Empress conveying her congratulations on the capture of the Sampagha Pass.

Lockhart's force spent the 30th October quietly in the Mastura Valley, as the transport took two days to negotiate the steep and difficult ascent to the pass. On the 31st October the force continued its advance.

The Arhanga Pass was found to be very weakly held, and its capture was quite unexciting. The 4th Brigade advanced up the centre of the pass, the 3rd Brigade made a demonstration to the left, while the 2nd Brigade made a flank attack to the right and captured a hill commanding the pass from the east. The attack was led by the Gurkha Scouts, the Yorkshire Regiment, and the 2/4th Gurkhas, and resolved itself into a race up the hillside between the two latter. It is regrettable to have to record that the Yorkshire Regiment won by a short head.

With the capture of the Arhanga Pass on the 31st October the force descended into the Maidan Valley, the first British force ever to enter the Tirah. It was to have many adventures and to fight some remarkably stiff actions during the next five or six weeks. It will be necessary here to record only those operations in which the Battalion was directly involved.

The force remained in its Maidan Camp until the 18th November. During this period negotiations were opened, the Orakzais, except the Massuzais and Khani Khel Chamkannis, accepting the British terms on the 12th. Some of the Afridi clans, however, remained irreconcilably hostile. Meanwhile skirmishes, resulting from punitive measures, foraging expeditions, reconnaissances, and convoy protection were of almost daily occurrence.

The Battalion was engaged in a skirmish on the 8th November, when the 2nd Brigade went out foraging. The Afridis, objecting to our seizure of large quantities of grain, were in hostile mood and followed up the withdrawal hotly. They suffered several casualties, whereas we, owing to the sound precautions taken and the good work of our troops, sustained only one casualty, a man of the 2/4th Gurkhas.

On the following day a Brigade of the 2nd Division carried out a reconnaissance of Saran Sar, a hill between the camp and the Bara Valley ; its retirement was closely pressed, and in the gathering darkness a rear party of the Northamptons, delayed by casualties, was practically surrounded in a deep unpiqueted nullah two miles from camp. It lost heavily, and was extricated with difficulty by a company of the 36th Sikhs. The noise of the battle was heard in camp, and a wing of the 2/4th Gurkhas and a company of the 3rd Sikhs were rushed out to cover the final withdrawal into camp. This was successfully accomplished.

Two days later the 2nd Brigade revisited Saran Sar to complete the survey and punish the tribesmen.

Many towers were destroyed, and large quantities of grain and fodder were brought in. The enemy again attempted to press the retirement, but were driven off with heavy loss.

On the 18th November the move of the force from the Maidan Valley to Bagh began, a distance of about three miles. Bagh was the religious centre of the Tirah. The 2nd Brigade was the first brigade to be sent, and came under heavy fire from the heights surrounding Bagh. These were cleared after a stubborn fight, and the camp and its piquets were so well established before dark that no casualties were suffered from the heavy sniping which punctuated the night, though several animals were hit.

During the next three days the whole force joined the 2nd Brigade at Bagh ; on the 21st the 2nd Brigade was again engaged, demolishing seventy towers.

On the 26th November a force was sent from Bagh to punish the Gar Massuzais and Khani Khel Chamkannis in the Khurmana Valley, some twenty-five miles west of Bagh, in co-operation with a column from the Kurram. The force from Bagh, under Brigadier-General Gaselee, was made up as follows :—

Two Mountain Batteries.
Two companies Sappers and Miners.
The Queen's Own Royal West Surrey Regiment.
3rd Sikh Infantry (Punjab Frontier Force).
28th Bombay Pioneers.
2/4th Gurkhas.
The Gurkha Scouts of both Divisions.

General Lockhart joined this force later, and for part of the march was escorted by the 2/4th Gurkhas.

Tirah, 1897-98

Opposition was met almost as soon as Bagh was left ; a constant running fight ensued, the establishment of every road piquet between Bagh and the first camp, a distance of four and a half miles, being slightly opposed. On the following day the steep Durbi Khel Pass was crossed, and the Lowara Mela in the Khurmana Valley reached on the 30th ; several villages were destroyed during this advance. At Lowara Mela the column from the Kurram was met.

On the 1st December a combined force was sent out to destroy Thabai, seven miles north of the camp and the principal village of the Khani Khel Chamkannis. At 10 A.M. the right column, which included the 2/4th Gurkhas and the Gurkha Scouts, reached a kotal commanding the village, and the battery opened fire. A company of the 2/4th was sent to occupy a hill to the west of Thabai, from which it dislodged the enemy. Owing to the difficult nature of the country, however, the general scheme of the operations was held up and the village was not destroyed. The retirement began at 4 P.M. and was, as usual, followed up ; it was, however, successfully accomplished, the Gurkha Scouts forestalling an attempt by the tribesmen to crown some hills commanding the line of withdrawal.

On the following day, the 2nd December, the operations against Thabai were resumed, the 2/4th Gurkhas forming the rear-guard to the force. In spite of fierce opposition the Gurkha Scouts stormed the hills to the west of Thabai, and the troops advanced up the valley, destroying all fortified villages and burning immense quantities of forage. At the conclusion of the operations the enemy had

lost heavily, but the British casualties were very slight.

On the 3rd December the combined columns broke up, the Kurram Column returning to Sadda and Gaselee's Column commencing its return to Bagh, *via* Khanki Bazar at the top of the Khanki Valley and the Chingakh Pass. The operations in the Khurmana had been so effective that this withdrawal was not molested, Bagh being reached on the 6th December.

For their conspicuous gallantry during these operations Jemadar Har Sing Bisht, Naik Surbir Gurung, and Rifleman Sete Thapa were each awarded the Indian Order of Merit.

The Chamkannis had now been dealt with; the Orakzais were cowed and had agreed to all terms demanded of them; the Afridis, though still full of fight, had been forced to abandon their ruined homesteads in the Tirah and seek shelter from the cold in the Bara and Bazar Valleys. Lockhart therefore decided to enter upon the last phase of his campaign, namely, to descend from the Tirah, march east along the valleys of the Bara and Mastura Rivers, and join hands with the Peshawar Column operating from Fort Bara.

On the 7th December the force began to move off from Bagh. By that time the cold was becoming severe, and the 2nd Division, marching down the Bara Valley, suffered badly from the trying conditions and from continual attacks by the Afridis. The 1st Division, however, travelling *via* the Mastura Valley and the Sapri Pass, had a much more tranquil march, and on the 13th December arrived in the

vicinity of Bara. The 2nd Brigade, the last to leave Bagh, marched one day behind the rest of the 1st Division.

So far as the 1st Division (and therefore the 2/4th Gurkhas) was concerned, the main operations of the Tirah Campaign were now at an end. The Division had not seen a great deal of the recent fighting, however, and for this reason it was chosen, shortly afterwards, to operate against the Afridis in the Bazar Valley.

Marching *via* Jamrud the 1st Division arrived near Ali Masjid on the 24th December, and on Christmas Day entered the Bazar Valley, the 2nd Brigade moving *via* the Chora Pass. The Zakka Khels, the Afridis who inhabit the Bazar Valley, were not present in force, and on the 27th December Gaselee's Brigade, accompanied by Sir William Lockhart, destroyed the village of China without much opposition, though its withdrawal was followed up on both flanks. A few days later the Brigade returned to Jamrud.

On the 29th January the 2nd Brigade formed part of a cordon round the Khajuri Plain in connection with a " beat " to capture the Afridis' flocks and herds. There was no opposition. This ended active operations in the campaign.

During the following six months Gaselee's Brigade remained in the Khyber as part of the garrison for Jamrud and Ali Masjid. By the 3rd April all the tribes had made submission, and eventually the troops were withdrawn. The 2/4th Gurkhas, after an adventurous year, found themselves back at Bakloh on the 19th June 1898.

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The India Medal, 1895, with clasp "Tirah," was granted to all troops who took part in the Tirah Campaign, and in 1900 the Regiment was awarded the Battle Honours "Punjab Frontier" and "Tirah."

The Tirah Campaign marked the culmination of an almost endless series of frontier military operations over a period of fifty years. Between 1895 and 1898 the tribesmen had risen and been severely punished not only in Tirah but throughout the North-West Frontier; in Chitral and Swat, in the Mohmand country, and in Waziristan. The tribesmen did not readily forget their lesson, and the fifteen years following the opening of the new century were more peaceful than any the frontier had ever known.

These operations were followed by two changes in frontier policy, introduced by the Viceroy. Lord Curzon created a frontier province separate from the Punjab, and by the autumn of 1901 the North-West Frontier Province, practically as we know it to-day, was an established fact. Lord Curzon also reversed the semi-forward policy which had obtained for so long, and arranged that all isolated outlying regular garrisons in tribal territory should be withdrawn and replaced by tribal militia.

CHAPTER VII.

1st Battalion in China, 1900-1901

DURING the Boxer Rising in 1900, the 1st Battalion was detailed to form part of the China Expeditionary Force under Major-General Sir A. Gaselee, K.C.B., A.D.C., under whom the 2nd Battalion had served in the Tirah Expedition.

Here, perhaps, a word on the causes of the trouble in China will not be out of place.

For more than half a century the Chinese, with the true conservatism of Orientals, had been aggravated and alarmed by the development of foreign trading settlements in their country. Indeed, it had only been by force of arms that the British, and later the French, had obtained any trading concessions at all. The defeat of China by Japan in 1895 was therefore the signal for a general scramble by Russia and the Western Powers for "spheres of interest," leases, and concessions of all kinds, a scramble which China found herself unable to withstand. The Chinese felt their position acutely, and the last three years of the nineteenth century saw the formation of train-bands of militia and secret societies sworn to oust the foreigner completely from the country. The members of the oldest of these societies, known as "Boxers," believed them-

selves to be invulnerable to bullets, and were determined not only to destroy foreigners but to persecute all Christians as well.

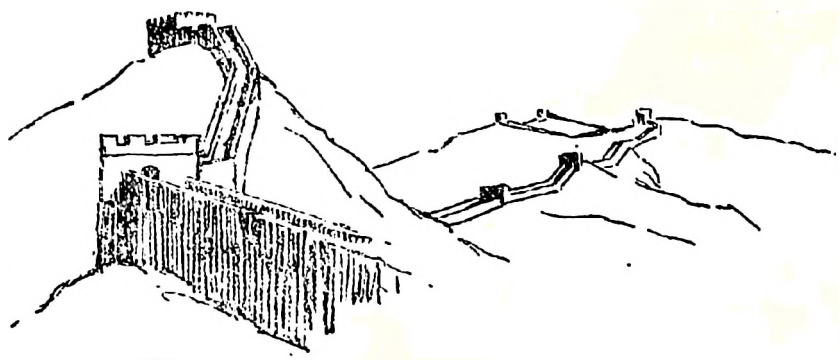
1st Battalion in China, 1900-1901

About the middle of June 1900 the storm broke. The German Minister at Peking was murdered, and other foreign Ministers were besieged in the legation quarter, while thousands of Chinese Christians were done to death, principally in the north-east of China. At Tientsin an international garrison was attacked and besieged.

The Powers took prompt measures. Naval forces of various nationalities were hurried to the scene; Tientsin was relieved, and towards the end of July British and Indian troops, eventually amounting to four brigades and a cavalry brigade, began to arrive from India as the China Expeditionary Force.

On the 25th June the exciting news reached the Mess that the 1st Battalion was to proceed to China—to make its first journey overseas, in fact. By the following evening the Battalion had been completely re-armed with Lee-Metford rifles. This was not quite the miraculous achievement it may seem, however, for the rifles, intended for the re-arming of the 2nd Battalion, had arrived at this opportune moment, and had simply been taken over by the 1st Battalion instead. There followed ten days of intensive musketry training and general preparation, and then, at 3 A.M. on the 5th July, the Battalion paraded to move off. One young subaltern appreciatively noted in his diary that, in spite of the early hour, "most of the ladies were on the parade ground to say good-bye."

Owing to shortage of water at Dhar, the Battalion



moved *via* Old Dunera and Baterah. It left Old Dunera at 11 P.M. on the 5th. The rains were due, but at that moment had not yet broken. They broke a quarter of an hour later, so far as the Battalion was concerned, and the march took place in pitch darkness through tremendous rain and storm. At about 2 A.M. on the 6th the Battalion reached the bed of the Chakki River and began to cross. As it did so the river started to rise. The leading companies got across with little more than wet feet, but a spate soon came swirling down through the darkness, and parts of no less than six companies were caught in the bed of the river. Some of the men were carried off their feet and nearly drowned, but the majority were fortunately able to find refuge on an island patch of shingle.

Four of the officers, Colonel Rundall, Captain Hutchinson, Lieutenant Young, and Lieutenant Nicolay, found themselves on this island and attempted to get back to the left bank, where some of the men and Lieutenant Brodhurst had remained. They formed a chain, and, with Captain Hutchinson leading, carrying a hurricane lamp, waded into the river. Underfoot the boulders were moving in the strong current, and ahead the lamp-light swayed ominously. A moment later the line broke and all four were carried away. Luckily they escaped with nothing more than a ducking, for each reached the bank in safety and was pulled out by willing helpers.

As for those remaining on the patch of shingle, at first they found the size of their island diminishing alarmingly as the waters rose, but towards morning

the floods went down, and by daylight the crossing was continued in safety. Two rifles and bayonets were reported lost, but these were recovered by police next day. The Battalion, none the worse for its adventure, reached Pathankot at 10 A.M. on the 7th July.

The Battalion travelled by train from Pathankot to Bombay, where, on the 15th July, it embarked on the Indian marine steamer *Canning* and the British India Steam Navigation Company's s.s. *Nowshera*.

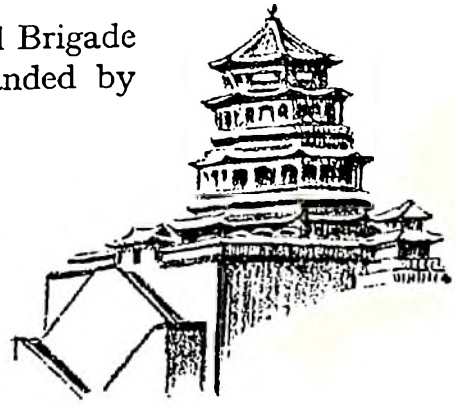
The officers who accompanied the Battalion to China were the following :—

Lt.-Col. F. M. Rundall, D.S.O., Commanding.
Major P. M. Carnegy, second in Command.
Capt. E. E. Couper.
Capt. E. C. Ryall.
Capt. G. H. C. Colomb.
Capt. A. H. Battye (2nd Battalion).
Capt. A. Grant (2nd Battalion).
Capt. C. R. M. Hutchinson.
Lieut. D. C. Young, Adjutant.
Lieut. B. M. L. Brodhurst, Quartermaster.
Lieut. B. U. Nicolay.
Capt. V. E. H. Lindesay, Medical Officer.

Lieutenant D. W. Maxwell joined the Battalion at Singapore.

The left wing, on the *Canning*, touched at Singapore, while the right wing, on the *Nowshera*, proceeded direct to Hong Kong. The whole Battalion disembarked at Hong Kong on the 1st August and went into camp on Stone Cutter's Island.

The Battalion now formed part of the 2nd Brigade of the China Expeditionary Force, commanded by



Brigadier-General O'Moore Creagh, V.C., the Brigade being made up as follows :—

2nd Bengal Infantry.
14th Sikhs.
30th Bombay Infantry.
1/4th Gurkhas.

With the exception of the 14th Sikhs, who had been left in India owing to cholera, the whole Brigade was now in camp at Hong Kong, where it remained for nine days till the 10th August. This delay in Hong Kong, though necessary to prevent trouble spreading to Canton, probably lost the Brigade the advance to relieve Peking. (Peking was relieved on the 14th August.)

On the 10th August the Brigade sailed from Hong Kong in four transports, the whole of the 1/4th Gurkhas being on the *Canning*. All hoped that they were destined for North China. It was not to be, however. Three thousand men were required for garrison work at Shanghai, and the 2nd Brigade was selected for this duty. After three days of uncertainty and delay off Woosang, the Brigade, to the disappointment of everyone in the Battalion, was moved up the Whang Poo River to Shanghai and there disembarked. The 1/4th Gurkhas disembarked on the 20th and 21st August and went into camp in Hongkew, opposite the Ewo cotton mills.

The Battalion thenceforward formed part of the protective force of Shanghai. This force eventually included the following troops :—

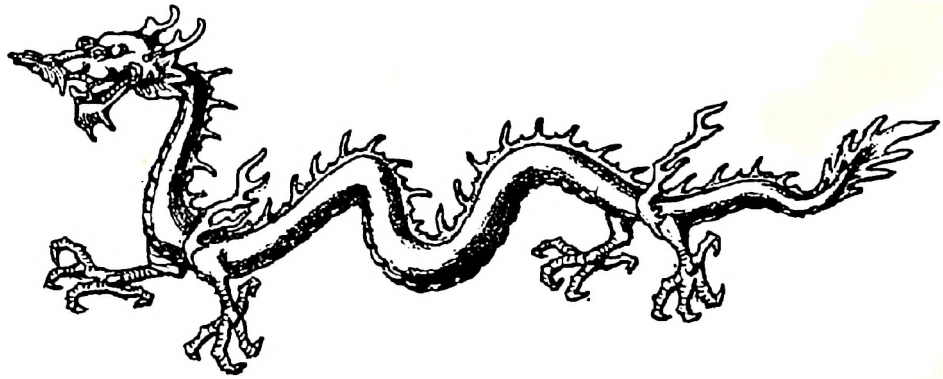
2nd Rajputs.
14th Sikhs.
3rd Baluchis.
1/4th Gurkhas.

together with a force of about 1700 Germans, French, and Japanese. There was also a large allied naval force stationed partly at Woosang and partly at Shanghai, and comprising British, French, German, Russian, American, Austrian, Italian, and Japanese ships. The Battalion remained at Shanghai for a period of ten months. It thus took no part in the active military operations in North China. These, apart from the relief of Peking in August, included no heavy fighting, and had practically ceased by November.

The Indian troops greatly interested and puzzled the population of Shanghai. At first it was not realised that there were other than Indian officers in Indian regiments. Indeed, a certain British officer of the Battalion, when having his tub one day, was pardonably startled when the fly of his tent was lifted and an astonished female voice ejaculated, "Why, he's white!" On the whole the Chinese liked the Gurkhas immensely. The Japanese troops were very friendly, too, and on one occasion a party of Gurkha officers was invited to an entertainment on a Japanese ship lying off Shanghai.

Queen Victoria died while the Battalion was in Shanghai. There was a big commemoration service in the cathedral, after which the Battalion's pipers played the "Flowers of the Forest."

While the Battalion was at Shanghai two men of the Battalion, Riflemen Ratan Sing Thapa and Padam Sing Thapa, accompanied as orderlies Lieutenant-Colonel Powell, who was on the staff of Count Waldersee, commanding the international forces. These two men on one occasion cut with



their kukris the wires connecting various land mines, so as to enable the Germans to advance. They were mentioned by name in Count Waldersee's despatches to the Emperor of Germany, and were recommended for the German Medal.

By the end of May 1901 the reduction of the allied forces in North China began. The 1st Brigade and other Indian units had already received their orders to return to India, and later further reductions in the British forces took place, garrisons being left only at the British Legation at Peking, at Shanghai (two battalions), and from Tientsin to Shan-hai-kuan. The Battalion was selected to remain in China as part of this last garrison, and on the 28th June 1901 it left Shanghai in the *Lalpura*. It disembarked at Sinho on the 2nd July, and thence proceeded by rail to Shan-hai-kuan, where the Great Wall of China commences. It came into the 3rd Brigade, under Brigadier-General A. J. F. Reid, C.B., and, when that Brigade was broken up on the 15th July, continued to furnish detachments to guard the line of rail as far as Kuyeh, in an area notorious for the presence of bands of armed robbers.

"Shan-hai-kuan," which means "the pass between the mountain and the sea," is, as its name implies, an important military locality. The Chinese city lies some five miles from the sea and a couple of miles from the hills, and is about a mile on the south side of the Great Wall. The Battalion now found itself part of an international force encamped between the Chinese city and a number of forts by the sea close to the termination of the Great Wall. The force consisted of British and Indian troops, Russians,

French, Germans, Japanese, and Italians. Under the circumstances, perhaps, a certain amount of friction between nationalities was inevitable.

About the middle of July the French evacuated their quarters in one of the forts and handed them over to the British. A guard of the 1/4th Gurkhas took them over, but was unable to hoist a British flag over the quarters because there was none available. Thereupon the Russians stepped into the breach and hoisted their own flag over the quarters—somewhat to the detriment of friendly relations.

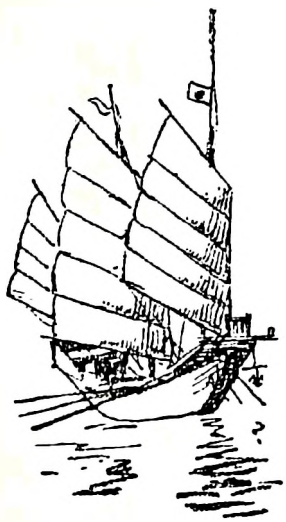
Early in September another unfortunate incident occurred, this time at the railway station. A Gurkha of the 1/4th was on sentry duty outside the staff room at the railway station with orders to allow nobody in until the staff officer, who was absent for a few minutes, should have returned to the room. When, therefore, a Russian officer demanded admittance the sentry refused him with a firm, "Hukum no, sahib!" The Russian grew indignant and struck the sentry twice, whereupon the sentry retaliated with his swagger cane and split the Russian's ear. The sentry was arrested and his instant execution was demanded by the Russian. He was, however, highly commended for his sense of duty and promoted to Lance Naik!

The lot of a sentry seems to have been a difficult one at about that time. Another Gurkha, on sentry duty in one of the forts, had a small tent stolen from near his post, and for his negligence was severely reprimanded and threatened with return to India. Some months later, when on sentry duty on the commissariat coal go-down, he discovered several

Chinamen stealing coal. Actuated, apparently, both by zeal and by a praiseworthy spirit of economy, he waited until he had two of the pilferers in line and then fired—scoring two hits with one shot. Next day a young officer noted philosophically in his diary that "The people who were loudest in their complaints about the pilfering of coal were now full of indignation at the sentry's action."

Whilst at Shan-hai-kuan fifty men of the Battalion were trained as mounted infantry. Mounted on China ponies, they soon became most efficient in this work, which was entirely new to them. Brigadier-General O'Moore Creagh, V.C., who succeeded Major-General Sir Alfred Gaselee in command of the China Field Force, at his inspection of the Battalion, pronounced the Gurkha Mounted Infantry to be the best in the force after the British. The Battalion's mounted infantry were commanded by Captain Cruddas, and trained by Lieutenant Hunter of the 31st Lancers, whom the 2nd Battalion met years later at Thal.

During this period also the Battalion was called upon to provide an escort for Lieutenant-Colonel Manifold and Captain Hander, who were proceeding on a secret mission into the interior of China. They were away for many months; on their return Lieutenant-Colonel Manifold wrote to Lieutenant-Colonel Rundall speaking in the highest terms of the good behaviour and excellent assistance afforded him by his Gurkha escort.



Whilst in North China the following officers were attached to the Battalion for duty :—

Capt. H. W. Cruddas.
Lieut. R. L. Birdwood.
Lieut. A. G. Shea.

1st Battalion in China, 1900-1901

On the 26th July 1902, having been relieved by the 30th Punjab Infantry, the Battalion left Shan-hai-kuan, and embarked next day for India on board the s.s. *Jelunga*. Owing to the screw shaft cracking, the ship had to put in to Singapore, where the Battalion remained (on board ship) from the 13th August until the 21st August. After this delay the Battalion was transhipped to the *Landaura*. It arrived in Calcutta at 7 P.M. on the 28th August, disembarked, and next day proceeded in two troop trains to Pathankot.

The Battalion arrived back at Bakloh on the 7th September 1902.

On the 9th September the Battalion was inspected by Major-General J. Wodehouse, C.B., who was pleased to address the men as follows :—

" I have never seen a regiment return from active service, and after five weeks on board ship and a week travelling in the train, so well and smartly turned out as you. I am glad to welcome you back to India and am proud to have you under my command in this district. I have heard that while you were in China you, by your good conduct and smartness and good discipline, kept up, not only the good name of Gurkhas, but of the whole Indian Army in the eyes of all the foreign troops ; and I am exceedingly pleased with all I have seen of you."

The China Medal was awarded to all troops who took part in this expedition, and the Regiment earned the Battle Honour " China, 1900."

Events, 1900-1914

Apart from the China Expedition, the years from the opening of the new century to the outbreak of the World War were comparatively uneventful ones

for both Battalions of the Regiment. Summer camps, autumn and winter manœuvres and inspections followed each other with regularity, while training proceeded steadily and satisfactorily.

In 1901 the title of the Regiment was changed from the "4th Gurkha (Rifle) Regiment" to the "4th Gurkha Rifles."

In February 1905 the 2nd Battalion was chosen as the Indian regiment to represent the III. Division for the Commander-in-Chief's Cup. Lord Kitchener himself, inspecting the Battalion at Bakloh at the end of April of the same year, stated that he was very pleased with what he had seen.

Kitchener, as a matter of fact, had had a previous introduction to the 2nd Battalion. The Battalion had spent the year 1902-1903 on garrison duty in Chitral, with headquarters at Kila Drosh, and the great man, then newly arrived in India, had visited it at Kila Drosh and been photographed with the officers. On the same occasion he had watched a Chitrali polo match, organised by the Mehtar, in which there were thirty players a side.

In April 1905, shortly before Kitchener's visit to Bakloh, there was a severe earthquake at Dharamsala, at which there were stationed the 2/1st Gurkha Rifles and the 7th Gurkha Rifles. The earthquake, which lasted only five seconds, caused the almost complete destruction of the station and brought death or injury to 665 men, women, and children. Bakloh escaped with very little damage, and the Regiment at once despatched a relief party across the hills. This arrived in a very creditably short time and did much useful work. Later, a silver

statuette of Naik (later Jemadar) Chand Sing of the 2nd Battalion was presented to the Regiment by the officers and men of the 1st Gurkhas as a token of their appreciation of the help we were able to give, while the 7th (later the 2/8th) Gurkhas gave us a chiming clock.

In June 1905 Subadar-Major Madho Sing Rana, Sirdar Bahadur, of the 2nd Battalion, was appointed A.D.C. to His Excellency the Viceroy, and his place was taken in the Battalion by Subadar Debi Chand. In the same year both Battalions of the Regiment took part in the review and march past at Rawal Pindi in honour of the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales.

During the first few years of the new century the health of the Regiment, especially of the 1st Battalion, gave cause for anxiety. On its return from China the Battalion was found to be severely infected with tuberculosis, and during 1903 and the beginning of 1904 no less than two hundred men were invalided from this cause. The trouble was due partly to the conditions under which the men had been quartered at Shan-hai-kuan and elsewhere in China, and partly to the antiquated barracks at Bakloh. As regards the barracks, steps were at once taken to deal with the situation. The whole of the 2nd Battalion and the families and married men of the 1st Battalion went under canvas during 1904 while the barracks were disinfected, a system of ridge ventilation was introduced, and extensive alterations were made. Work was also begun on the construction of new married quarters.

In January 1906 Colonel A. G. F. Browne, C.B.,

D.S.O., who had commanded the 2nd Battalion from 1889 to 1902, was appointed as the first "Colonel" of the Regiment. (Colonel Browne was later to become Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Browne, K.C.B.)

In October of the same year a further distinction was conferred on the Regiment, for the Prime Minister of Nepal, His Excellency Major-General Maharaja Sir Chandra Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana, G.C.S.I., was appointed Honorary Colonel of the Regiment. In February 1907 a deputation from the Regiment waited on the Honorary Colonel at Calcutta and presented to him the following address :—

To His Excellency Major-General Sir Chandra Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana, G.C.S.I., Honorary Colonel, 4th Gurkha Rifles.

Your Excellency: The officers and men of the 4th Gurkha Rifles have been greatly elated by the appointment of Your Excellency as Honorary Colonel of the Regiment, and Colonel Macintyre and I, as Commandants of the two Battalions, and Subadar-Major Debi Chand have come to Calcutta from Bakloh, a distance of some 1200 miles, to convey to Your Excellency personally in the name of all ranks of the Regiment their sentiments of pride at the honour which has been conferred on them by the King Emperor's appointment of Your Excellency, who holds the rank of Major-General in the British Army, as their Colonel. We hope Your Excellency may long live to hold the Honorary Colonelcy, and it will always be a great incentive to the Regiment to know that the eyes of the Prime Minister and Marshal of their country will be watching their deeds in peace and war.

The officers of the Regiment have ordered from England for Your Excellency's acceptance a Sword such as is worn

in Rifle Regiments, with a suitable inscription, which will arrive in due course.

In conclusion, we beg to hand Your Excellency as our Colonel the Present States of our respective Battalions and a small history of the Regiment.

(Sd.) P. M. CARNEGY, Colonel,
Commandant, 2/4th G.R.

(Sd.) D. MACINTYRE, Lieut.-Col.,
Commandant, 1/4th G.R.

Dated at Calcutta the 15th day of February 1907.

Just over a year after this ceremony, in November 1907, Colonel Carnegy had an excellent opportunity to present the sword to the Maharaja, for he was detailed to travel to Kathmandu and there to inspect the escort of the British Resident in Nepal. Captain B. U. Nicolay, Recruiting Officer for Gurkhas, accompanied him and represented the 1st Battalion. The presentation took place at a garden party at the Residency, in the presence of a large company of Nepalese princes and nobles.

In 1906 General Walter Kitchener was commanding the Lahore Division. He said that he worked everyone so hard in the cold weather that a bit of play in the hot weather would do them good. So was inaugurated the famous "Khajiar week." Khajiar is an "Alp," a green meadow surrounded by pine trees, about half-way between Dalhousie and Chamba. A double company of the 4th Gurkhas under Major Colomb was there for a month beforehand, preparing tent sites and collecting firewood and so on. They even levelled a place for dancing which was known as "Colomb's Dancing Saloon."

Thereafter all Dalhousie and Bakloh migrated to Khajiar, and danced, rode, played golf, or an even older game, and forgot the world. The experiment was repeated while General Kitchener was in command, but his successors frowned on it.

During the year 1907 the Regiment celebrated the jubilee of its birth—fifty years from the founding of the 1st Battalion. The Divisional and Brigade Commanders attended the celebrations, and Lieutenant Macintyre, 2nd King George's Own Gurkha Rifles, son of Donald Macintyre who raised the Regiment, was also present. Colonel D. C. F. Macintyre, commanding the 1st Battalion from 1903 till 1910, was the nephew of Donald Macintyre.

In 1908 it seemed that the 1st Battalion was to have a chance of field service. In April of that year all furlough was cancelled for the Battalion owing to trouble on the North-West Frontier, and on the 1st May the Battalion received orders to mobilise and proceed to Nowshera. Mobilisation was completed that afternoon, and on the 3rd May the Battalion, made up to strength by drafts from the 2nd Battalion, moved from Bakloh. It reached Pathankot on the 5th, and Nowshera the following day. On the 12th May orders were received to join the 3rd Brigade of the Mohmand Field Force, and the Battalion entrained for Peshawar that evening. Everybody's spirits and hopes were high with what seemed the certainty of active service in front of them.

Alas for hopes! Two cases of cholera were reported before Peshawar was reached, and the Battalion was sent into segregation camp at Hariana, six miles north of Peshawar. It was very hot, and

GURKHA GIRL.
By Lance-Naik Kaluram Rana.

owing to the disappointment everyone was a little on edge. Major Grant, transferred from the 2nd Battalion to act as Commanding Officer in the absence of Colonel Macintyre on leave, wisely kept the Battalion hard at work. One afternoon he was unable to do so, however, as witness the following story :—

"We returned about 2 P.M. one day with our tongues hanging out, and he (Grant) came into lunch roaring for lime juice and pani. His trembling servant gave him a brimming beaker which he half drained—and then fled from the tent choking and swearing he was poisoned. It was lime juice and neat gin! But the result was a quiet afternoon, as Grant had an enforced and long siesta."

Strict precautions were taken with regard to the cholera, and the infection did not spread to any marked degree, but two lives were lost, and the few cases that occurred were sufficient to prevent the Battalion proceeding on Field Service. June 1908 saw the Battalion back at Bakloh once more.

During 1908 Lieutenant M. Wylie (now Lieutenant-Colonel M. Wylie, C.I.E.) accompanied the Maharaja of Nepal on the latter's first visit to England.

The Maharaja had asked for him, as he had been in Nepal as a child, when his father was Resident there. He was allowed to take his orderly, Rifleman Jowala Sing, a fine-looking charjat Gurung, and intelligent enough to take in a great deal. He was considered a prime liar when he got back with stories of trains running underground, and other trains that ran suspended from wires (the trams).

At Marseilles he and an orderly of the 5th Gurkhas were put in charge of the boxes containing the Maharaja's jewelled hats, and they travelled the whole way to Calais in the luggage-van, sitting on the boxes.

In August 1909 there was a change of command in the 2nd Battalion, for Colonel Carnegy was appointed to the Staff of the Lahore Division. Lieutenant-Colonel A. Grant took over command of the Battalion.

The following year, 1910, the 1st Battalion also had a change of command, for Colonel D. C. F. Macintyre left the Battalion to take up a position on the General Staff. Lieutenant-Colonel W. G. Walker, V.C., took over command of the Battalion.

In April 1910 Subadar-Major Rannu Thapa was selected for appointment as Assistant Cantonment Magistrate on Probation, and proceeded to Meerut. Two years later he was confirmed in that appointment as from October 1910.

In October 1910 His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief inspected the Regiment at Bakloh. He was pleased with the men, but condemned the barracks and ordered estimates to be submitted and repairs to be taken in hand, for which he later sanctioned a special grant. Work was commenced in February 1911, when the barracks of " H " and " F " Companies of the 1st Battalion were dismantled.

The year 1911 was an eventful one for the Regiment. The 1st Battalion was selected to provide the guards for the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief for the year, and the party, consisting of 1 British officer, 4 Gurkha officers, and 198 N.C.O.'s

and men, was at Simla from March till October. Before its return to Bakloh the following letter was received from His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief :—

" Your detachment will be returning shortly, and I would like to tell you how pleased I am with their smartness, good conduct and cheerfulness while on duty here. At all times, in uniform and out of uniform, their conduct left nothing to be desired. I am very pleased with them and will be obliged if you will tell them so from me on their return."

It was the year of the Coronation Durbar. The 1st Battalion band went to Delhi and joined the massed bands there (Captain C. D. Roe being appointed Adjutant to the Massed Bands' Camp), while the 2nd Battalion was present as a whole and took part in all the important ceremonies, including the State arrival and the State departure. Seven Durbar Medals were awarded to the 1st Battalion band, and twenty-three medals to the officers and men of the 2nd Battalion, while several Gurkha officers of the 2nd Battalion were presented to His Imperial Majesty the King-Emperor. The men of the 1st Battalion band were subsequently highly praised by the Commandant of the Massed Bands' Camp, who expressed himself as follows in his report :—

" I am not surprised at the high reputation of Gurkha Regiments if I am to judge by the numbers of first-rate men from four different ranks supplied by your one Battalion."

After the Coronation Durbar King George V. went to shoot in the Nepal Terai as the guest of the

Maharaja of Nepal. At the Maharaja's special request Lieutenant H. E. W. Bell-Kingsley, 4th Gurkhas, together with two officers of other units, was present to help with the camp arrangements. Two camps had been carved out of dense forest on the banks of the Rapti River, and some sixty miles of motor road specially made through the forest to link the camps with railhead at Bhikna Thoree. In each camp there was a perfectly appointed shooting-box for His Majesty and his private secretary, Lord Stamfordham. The rest of the party lived in luxurious tents.

Six hundred elephants were used for the shoots, in the course of which some thirty-nine tiger and nineteen rhino were accounted for. On one occasion His Majesty got a right and left at galloping rhino, and on another a right and left at a bear and a tiger.

On Christmas Day 1911 the Maharaja made his Christmas gift to His Majesty. This consisted of the male and female of every wild animal to be found in Nepal, with, in some cases, a pair of albino types as well. The only single animals were a magnificent Tibetan stag and a wild horse, or "kyang." In addition, there was a large marquee filled with brocades, wood and ivory carvings, brass-work, and complete issues of the stamps and coinage of Nepal. His Majesty's gift to the Maharaja was a number of modern rifles and ammunition. In all, the party remained in the Terai for about eleven days.

In February 1914 Lieutenant-Colonel Grant of the 2nd Battalion went on leave pending retirement. Major C. R. M. Hutchinson took over the officiating

command of the Battalion, being appointed to the permanent command on the 3rd August 1914.

During the spring and early summer of 1914 both battalions of the Regiment remained at Bakloh, carrying on with their routine duties. Indeed, they had done little else for more than a decade. The prospect of active service, however, was not far distant.

CHAPTER VIII.

1ST BATTALION.

Givenchy, 1914

AT the end of July 1914 the 4th Gurkhas, in common with all regiments of the Indian Army, was warned to hold itself in readiness, and all leave beyond forty-eight hours' recall was stopped. On the 5th August the Secretary of State for India cabled the Viceroy, approving the despatch of two divisions of the Indian Army to France.

On the 8th August the 1st Battalion received orders to mobilise. The war establishment of a battalion in those days was 736 of all ranks. Since it was the time of the monsoon and a large number of the men were on furlough in Nepal and difficult to recall, the 1st Battalion was greatly under strength, and had to call upon the 2nd Battalion for a reinforcement of 4 Gurkha officers and 125 men. In addition to this a ten per cent reinforcement of 74 men drawn from the same source accompanied the Battalion.

The proportion of 2nd Battalion men that accompanied the 1st Battalion was therefore high, and throughout the War whichever battalion was overseas was fed largely from the other battalion of the

Regiment. Though, for convenience, the stories of the two battalions are told separately in this volume, it must be remembered that the Battle Honours earned were so earned by the Regiment and not by either battalion individually.

Givenchy, 1914

On the 12th August the 1/4th Gurkhas marched out of Bakloh at full field service strength, plus the ten per cent reinforcement in Gurkha ranks. Colonel W. G. Walker, V.C., was officiating as Inspector of Imperial Service Troops at Bombay, so the command of the Regiment was temporarily in the hands of Major R. E. Travers.

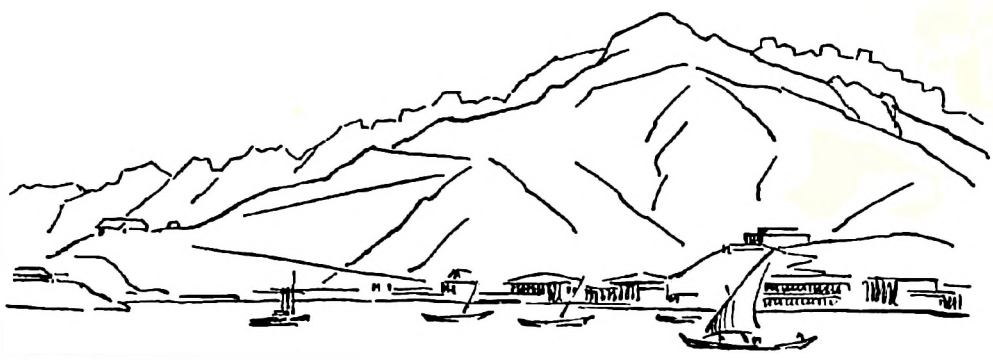
The following officers left Bakloh with the Battalion :—

Major R. E. Travers.
Major B. U. Nicolay.
Capt. R. C. B. Yates.
Capt. A. M. Rundall.
Capt. L. P. Collins.
Capt. M. T. Cramer-Roberts.
Capt. D. Inglis.

Captain M. Wylie was left in command of the depot pending relief by Captain C. D. Roe, absent at Simla, and rejoined the Battalion before it embarked.

The Battalion arrived at Bombay on the 24th August 1914, and was there joined by Colonel Walker. The same day it embarked on the British India Steamship Company's ship *Baroda*, being the first unit of the Indian Army to leave India for service in the Great War.

The Battalion then formed part of the Indian Expeditionary Force "A." This force was composed of two divisions, the 3rd (Lahore) Division



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Givenchy, 1914

and the 7th (Meerut) Division. The Lahore Division was made up of three brigades: the Jullundur Brigade, the Ferozepore Brigade, and the Sirhind Brigade. The Sirhind Brigade was made up as follows :—

1st Battalion Highland Light Infantry.
125th Napier's Rifles.
1/1st Gurkhas.
1/4th Gurkhas.

The ships carrying the Sirhind Brigade sailed from Bombay in convoy on the 26th August. The voyage was a slow one, for the German cruisers *Emden* and *Konigsberg* were known to be about, and the convoy had thus to be kept well together. The engines of the *Baroda* broke down several times, and whenever this happened the ship was left to wallow helplessly in the monsoon for a time. The Gurkha ranks were very sea-sick at first, but later recovered enough to speculate as to how the ship could know where to go. One ingenious fellow asked the Adjutant if it ran along rails at the bottom of the sea.

The convoy reached Suez on the 9th September, and the Sirhind Brigade was at once ordered to relieve the 1st Devons on Canal defence so that the latter might proceed to England. The Brigade landed the same day, and during the night relieved the 1st Devons at Suez, Ismailia, Kantara, and Port Said.

The Battalion was in Brigade Reserve at Ismailia for a time, and later took over the defence of the Kantara section of the Canal. Everyone feared that the War would be over in a few months. It was hard to have to watch the ships carrying our more fortunate comrades of our own Division, and then of the Meerut Division and the Indian Cavalry Corps,

Givenchy, 1914

passing through the Canal daily. We dug trenches, which were filled up by the shifting sands almost as fast as we dug them. We patrolled the Canal banks and watched for mines, without any very clear idea of what they would look like if we found any. Bathing, fishing, and trips up and down the Canal in the Canal Company's launches were the chief amusements.

The men took their duties seriously. One party, consisting of an N.C.O. and a section, was stationed on the Canal with orders to fire on anything approaching their post that they thought dangerous. One evening a first-class British battleship was coming down the Canal. The Adjutant received a telephone message from the N.C.O. on the Canal: "Sahib, there is a big ship covered with guns coming down the Canal; shall we fire?" Later the Adjutant asked the man at what part of the ship he would have directed his fire. "Oh, at the Captain Sahib and the other sahibs on the bridge," replied the N.C.O. with some intelligence. This story got round in Naval circles, and in future when any British battleship or cruiser came along the Canal an urgent wire would arrive from the senior Naval officer. "H.M.S. —— coming down the Canal; for God's sake tell your men not to fire!"

While at Kantara the Battalion was twice called out into the desert to assist units of the Camel Corps against Arab raiders, but on neither occasion was it actually engaged.

During the whole of this period Colonel Walker was acting in command of the Brigade, since the Brigadier, General Brunker, had proceeded to France. Captain H. G. C. Hynes did not rejoin the Battalion,

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being taken ill on his arrival in Egypt. Lieutenant J. R. Hartwell was now serving as Adjutant to the 2/8th Gurkhas in France.

Towards the end of November the Indian Expeditionary Force "E" arrived in Egypt, and the Sirhind Brigade thankfully shook the dust of the Canal Zone from its boots. France at last! Three times before the move had been ordered, and each time a change of plan had brought bitter disappointment. Now we were really off.

On the evening of the 23rd November the Brigade sailed from Alexandria for Marseilles, the 1/4th Gurkhas and the 1/1st Gurkhas travelling together on the Canadian Pacific liner *Monteagle*, a fine ship of 10,000 tons.

The Brigade arrived at Marseilles on the 1st December, and the 1/4th were at once served out with new machine-guns and rifles and with warm clothing. The men were highly pleased with the woolly vests and drawers with which they were issued. They put them on over their khaki and, thus arrayed, marched the half-mile from the depot back to the ship. This caused a great sensation among the ladies of Marseilles, who turned out in force to behold the strange spectacle.

Next day, the 2nd December, the Battalion entrained for Orleans. After a halt of a few days at Orleans it went on by train to Merville, whence, on the 7th December, it marched to billets in farms and homesteads near Leslobes, about five miles west of Neuve Chapelle.

During their short stay at Leslobes the men made many friends. At first the farmers' wives of the

district had been terrified at the idea of sheltering Indian troops in their homes. They soon discovered, however, that Gurkhas know better than most people how to behave, and they were immensely astonished and pleased when the men brought in to them the eggs which they found around the farms. "What good men," said one old lady. "Our boys would have had those eggs in their soup in no time."

It may be said here that during the whole time the Battalion was in France when not in the trenches it was billeted on the French people, and never once was a complaint made as to the behaviour of a single man. Always the inhabitants were treated with courtesy and respect, and this in a country denuded of its men, most of whom were away fighting. It is a fine example and a fine record that should live for ever in the memory of all ranks.

On the 12th December the Sirhind Brigade took its place in the front line, and the 1/4th, in Brigade reserve, marched to billets in the Rue de Bethune, about a mile west of Festubert. Here the Battalion had its first taste of modern war, for the billets were being heavily shelled. There were few casualties, for the men took cover in ditches round about, but one shell found the Adjutant's office and destroyed most of the papers and records there. This was a godsend to the Adjutant and Quartermaster, who were besieged with irritating returns and memos. For some time afterwards the unfailing reply to a reminder was, "It is regretted that the correspondence was destroyed by hostile shell-fire." Our competent Brigade-Major, David Ridgeway, had a sense of

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humour and replied that "The effects of the shell referred to must cease after the —— inst."

On the night of the 16th December the Battalion moved up into the front line, taking over from the 125th Napier's Rifles a subsection of trenches east of Festubert and immediately north of Givenchy. The great adventure had begun.

The country in which the Battalion found itself was flat and exceedingly muddy. Imagine a narrow straggling road running through an almost flat country. It passes through a small plantation, Le Plantin, and so on through a long meandering village of smashed and battered stone and brick houses—Festubert. On each side of the road are brown ploughed fields, sodden with rain. Walking in them one sinks knee-deep in soft, clinging mud. Ditches, cut in every direction, separate one field from another, and in peace-time drain the country. Now, for want of attention, they are blocked and full of water. The ditches are bordered with pollard willows. In the fields are to be seen a few ricks of straw and stacks of mangold-wurzels and beans. Bundles of the latter are propped up on sticks to keep them off the wet ground, and in the failing light look for all the world like ragged men standing about in the fields.

From the road at Le Plantin to the eastward the ground slopes slightly upwards to the little village of Givenchy; it sinks again for a couple of hundred yards and then rises past the German line to the group of large houses called St Roche, about a thousand yards north-east of Givenchy. A mile and a half east of Givenchy, on the culminating point of this high ground, lies the larger village or small town of

La Bassée. Thus a low ridge runs from La Bassée through Givenchy and dies away before it reaches Le Plantin. In ordinary country it would not be noticed and would have no tactical value, but in this flat land it gives good command to those who hold it.

Some weeks before the time of which we are speaking the British had attacked in this area. Slowly and with heavy fighting the Germans had been pushed back, east of Festubert, east of Givenchy, and then no farther. In the flat, featureless, but then almost dry country there was nothing for troops to hold but the farms, villages, and ditches. The troops of both sides held the ditches, prepared them for defence, and called them trenches. Later the winter rains came, the ditches filled with water, and the mud at the bottom of them was churned up into a brown glutinous mess. This, when shovelled up on to the parapets and parados, promptly oozed back again into the trench.

Soft, sticky mud pervaded everything. In the trenches and in the fields one sank to the knees in it. Mud covered one's clothes, one's hands, face, and hair. It sucked the puttees from one's legs and caught and pulled off the trousers of those who, like our men, wear no braces. It entered the barrels, bolts, and chambers of the rifles and clogged the sword-springs so that they would not grip, and the swords, falling from the useless rifles, were lost in the mud. Ammunition, field-glasses, whistles, all became covered with the greasy slime and might have been so much scrap-iron for all the use they were. At a distance of a few hundred yards it became

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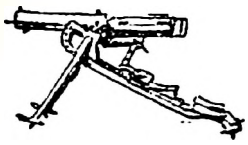

impossible to distinguish friend from foe. All uniforms and faces looked alike, all the colour of mud.

Throughout the time the Battalion was in the line the rain fell steadily on the coverless trenches. Clothes were never dry. The men feared, even when in local reserve, to remove their boots lest they should not again be able to draw them on to their swollen feet. The puttee, that invention of the devil himself, added to the trouble. Fearing that they would be pulled off by the mud the men tied their puttees as tightly as possible, and, as a result, soaking and ice-cold feet were deprived of the circulation that was necessary to them. This caused a high proportion of trench and frost-bitten feet, which, besides causing a great deal of suffering, greatly reduced the fighting strength and mobility of the Battalion, as also of all troops in the area.

Such were the conditions that the advanced party found when it went ahead of the Battalion to take over our trenches and to be introduced to the " game."

We of the advanced party stood in a ruined building in Le Plantin and looked over the dreary brown land, trying to distinguish the trenches. We could see some banks of ditches that seemed to be a few inches higher than others, but we could not decide whether these were fire or communication trenches or whether they were held by our troops or by the enemy. Dotted over the plain were the bodies of those—British, Indian, Gurkha, or German—who had fallen in the attacks and counter-attacks that had from time to time swept over the desolate waste. Of movement there was none. The only sounds

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were the occasional cracks of rifles, the swish of stray bullets, and now and then the crash of a gun or trench-mortar shell or bomb.

Then came a slow plod over two or three hundred yards of open fields, enlivened by an occasional sniper's bullet which passed with a crack or buried itself in the mud near-by. At last we dropped into a ditch in use as a communication trench, ploughed our way through it, waist-deep in mud and water, and so we reached the front-line trench. This, under the continual shovelling out of the churned-up mud, had gradually deepened until the bottom was some six feet below the top of the parapet. To enable the men to shoot from the trench a fire-step of greasy sand-bags or planks had been built. This was slippery with the mud, and to climb on to it, and, when arrived, to stay on it, was a labour and a difficulty. One continually found oneself slipping, slipping back into the trench.

A peep through a loophole showed the German trenches about a hundred and twenty to a hundred and fifty yards distant. In front of them was a line of wire entanglement, a luxury that our trenches lacked. A shout of "Bomb!" drew all eyes upwards. There it was, high in the air, falling slowly and turning over and over as it fell. A German trench-mortar in action. The experienced troops were quick to recognise into which bay the bomb would fall, and they scrambled as fast as the mud would allow them round the nearest traverse. We followed as soon as we grasped the idea, our last steps being hurried by a deafening explosion and a shower of mud.

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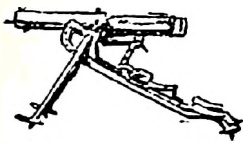

This time the latter proved a friend to us new hands. The bomb sank deeply into the mud, which held up and broke the force of the flying splinters.

To reply to the enemy's trench-mortars we had invented a wonderful weapon. It consisted of an ordinary field-gun cartridge-case on a small frame with a touch-hole bored in it. With a charge of black powder it fired a large four-pound jam tin filled with gun-cotton and fitted with a safety fuse and a commercial detonator. The flash of the discharge ignited the fuse and this, in turn, fired the detonator. Like " Old Bill's " shell, the bomb, on landing, " fizzled a bit " before exploding. The extreme range of the piece was about a hundred and seventy yards. It was a crude and inaccurate weapon compared with the enemy's trench-mortar, but it served its purpose in that it gave us the feeling of being able to hit back. Probably it hurt not one German in its existence.

With this sketch of conditions in the trenches we will return to the Battalion.

Moving from its billets an hour or so before dark on the 16th December the Battalion marched for Le Plantin. The men were heavily laden, each man carrying a greatcoat, a blanket, and a change of clothing (useless encumbrances the last two proved to be). The days were short, the sun rising about 7 A.M. and setting about 3 P.M., and darkness was closing down as we approached Le Plantin.

The hostile trenches are marked by the steady rise and fall of Vérey lights. They rise in front, to the right, to the left, and even behind, for the line curls and winds across France, never running for long in one direction. Enemy lights they are for the

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most part, for our troops have few, and these are reserved for use in real emergencies. The enemy has a goodly supply, and every sentry seems to send up an endless succession of them. The rifle-fire is no longer spasmodic, but almost continuous. It is mixed with bursts of machine-gun fire (the Lewis-gun had not yet been invented and battalions were armed with rifles and two machine-guns each), the bullets crackling merrily against the walls of the houses in the village. We double past the cross-roads, for on each is sure to be laid a machine-gun. Every now and then the fire bursts into a roar as nervous troops take alarm, man their trenches, and pour rapid fire across No Man's Land.

The Battalion halts, guides are distributed, and company after company leaves the cover of the houses and flounders away across the fields for its place in the trenches.

Nerves are now on edge. The flashes of the rifles ahead, the whistle of the bullets, the steadily falling rain, and the alternate flare of Vérey light and the contrasting pitch blackness of the night give the feeling that anything may happen. With every light that rises we feel that we are discovered by the enemy ; the whole plain seems to be alive with moving men. It is some time before we discover that these " men " are the stunted trees and piles of beans, their shadows all moving with the moving flares. Nor do we yet know that it is perfectly safe to remain upright and even continue moving under the flare of a Vérey light. What matters movement when everything that throws a shadow appears to be moving ?

At last, with a sigh of relief, we drop into the

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communication trench for the last hundred yards or so of the advance, and ploughing through mud and water we reach the front line.

The relief of the outgoing troops is a long business. The enemy is near. No risks can be taken. Our trenches are not protected by obstacles of any kind. Obviously the enemy are aware of unusual movement in our area and are nervous. More and more Vérey lights rise, the bursts of heavy fire are more frequent, machine-gun bullets sweep the parapet, and the trench-mortars are active. Luckily in the dark the shooting is not good.

The men are told off into groups of three. Continuously, day and night, for as long as the company remains in the front line, each group is to find one sentry and his reliefs. In each group the sentry stands on the fire-step, the reliefs crouch in the bottom of the trench with their waterproof sheets over their heads, trying to keep fairly dry and even to sleep if the cold will let them.

Our men "stand to," the relieved troops "stand down," and after a while the latter plod away down the communication trench, leaving us on guard. At long last we are face to face with the enemy.

The Sirhind Brigade position consisted of a front-line trench, as already described, a support trench some seventy yards in rear, and a reserve line about four hundred yards in rear of the support line. This last was just a ditch, full of water. South of the Sirhind Brigade right flank the line ran round the east edge of Givenchy, which village was but weakly fortified and held. Although not in the Sirhind Brigade area Givenchy dominated the whole Brigade

position, and the omission to fortify it strongly was later to cost the Battalion—and, in fact, the whole Indian corps—dearly.

The Brigade line was now held from the right (south) by one company 1st Highland Light Infantry, the 1/4th Gurkhas, one company 1st Highland Light Infantry, the 1/1st Gurkhas, one company 1st Highland Light Infantry. In Brigade Reserve were the 1st Highland Light Infantry, less three companies, and the 125th Napier's Rifles. On the right of the Brigade position was the 129th D.C.O. Baluchis, while on the left of the position was the Bareilly Brigade of the Meerut Division.

The Brigade line was divided into two sub-sectors, the right commanded by Colonel Walker, V.C. This sub-sector included two companies 1st Highland Light Infantry, and the 1/4th Gurkhas, whose "D" Company was in local reserve.

The 1/4th Gurkhas were disposed with three companies in the front line, "A," "B," and "C" from right to left, each of these companies having one platoon in the support trench as company reserves. The reserve company lived in Le Plantin village, ready either for counter-attack or to hold the reserve trench as required. These dispositions gave inadequate depth to the defence, but were necessitated by the great length of front and by the intention of the higher command that the front line must be held at all costs.

The Battalion had no sooner taken over its trenches than it was warned to prepare for an attack on the enemy.

The French army had decided to attack on a

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grand scale south of the British front. It was important that the Germans should not be able to send reinforcements south from in front of the British. It was therefore decided that the enemy should be attacked at various points on the British front at the same time as the French attack was launched. One of these attacks was to be carried out by the 1st Highland Light Infantry and the 1/4th Gurkhas north of Givenchy, each battalion employing two companies.

The heavy fighting of the early months of the war had almost exhausted the British supplies of artillery ammunition. Hence the attacks could not be supported by strong artillery fire. For crossing the fire-swept zone in front of the enemy trenches our troops had to rely on darkness and surprise. But the enemy trenches were protected by wire entanglements. True, these were hardly worthy of the name of entanglements, being just a few strands of wire slung between posts, but they were sufficient to delay an assault for those precious moments that made the difference between success and failure. Artillery fire could not be used to cut the wire, for that would have made surprise impossible. It is doubtful whether anyone had then thought of cutting wire by that method, and in any case the artillery had not sufficient ammunition.

The Battalion scouts, under the command of Captain D. Inglis, the Adjutant, were therefore given the honour of cutting the enemy's wire and then guiding the attacking companies to the gaps.

At 12.30 A.M. on the 19th December the Battalion scouts, in two groups, crept out of our trenches.

Each group carried with it a roll of telephone wire which was unwound as the group moved forward. This telephone wire was intended to help the scouts to guide the companies to the gaps in the wire, and also to serve as a means of communication later.

For the scouts it was a nerve-racking duty. The whole time they were out the enemy's Vérey lights rose and fell. Had they been discovered the whole enemy line would have leapt into flame as every rifle and machine-gun turned on to the adventurers. Not a single man could have escaped. As it was, the enemy seemed more than once to have discovered them, for he opened rapid fire which seemed to be directed upon them. Fortunately these bursts proved to be but the result of the usual nervousness and the fire was directed high, to hit the parapet of our trenches. Alternately crawling and lying buried in the mud the scouts reached the enemy's wire and cut a number of gaps in it. Then, leaving men at intervals along the telephone wires, the bulk of them crept back to the forming-up place behind our support trench.

In the meantime the attacking companies had formed up, and now moved forward to just behind our front-line trench to await the hour of assault. At 4 A.M. all the British guns crashed out in a short but heavy bombardment of the enemy's trenches. It was the signal for the advance. Our companies pressed forward over the front line and, led by the scouts, lay down just short of the enemy's wire. At five minutes past four our guns lifted and, led by Major Nicolay, 1/4th Gurkhas, and Lieutenant

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Anderson, Highland Light Infantry, the men rose and assaulted the enemy's front line. The Germans were completely surprised and little more than a ragged volley opposed the assault. A few minutes' delay ensued while the front-line garrison was being disposed of, and then the advance continued. But the British artillery had now ceased fire. The enemy was thoroughly roused, and the fire from his support line swept the hundred yards or so of sodden ground over which our men were trying to flounder. Our attack on the enemy's support trench failed, as did that of the H.L.I. on our right, and we had to be content with the capture of the front line.

Unfortunately during the assault Captain Inglis had been killed, shot through the head. The intention had been that he and his scouts should withdraw as soon as they had shown the gaps through the wire, but he and they had begged so hard to be allowed to see the task through to the finish that they had been allowed to stay and take part in the assault.

The gallantry of the Battalion scouts on this occasion needs very special mention. No. 3904, Rifleman Sarupsing Thakur, and No. 4145, Rifleman Budibal Thapa, were killed during the crawl forward to the enemy's wire. No. 4743, Rifleman Damarsing Gurung, and No. 4745, Rifleman Karnasing Pun, were shot dead while cutting the wire. No. 4843, Rifleman Chature Gurung, and No. 99, Rifleman Motilal Pun, were found dead beside the guiding telephone wire, which was still gripped in their dead hands. Naik (afterwards Subadar-Major and Honorary Lieutenant) Dewansing and Rifleman (afterwards Subadar) Parbir Gurung were awarded the

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Indian Order of Merit, and Lance-Naik Lokbir Ale and Rifleman Tikaram Thapa were both recommended for awards which unfortunately they did not receive.

The Germans are not the people to sit down under a reverse. Small parties, gallantly led by their officers and N.C.O.'s, at once commenced a series of counter-attacks with bullet, bomb, and bayonet. These counter-attacks continued in increasing strength all that night and the following day. They were all repulsed, but while they continued, first from the flanks and later from the front as well, it was impossible properly to consolidate the captured trenches.

As day broke and the enemy's fire became more and more intense and accurate, it was found increasingly difficult to maintain our superiority of fire. Indeed it could not have been maintained at all but for the fire support given by rifles and machine-guns from our own front line.

As the light improved it was found that the captured trenches could be enfiladed by rifle and machine-gun fire from the buildings of St Roche on the right front. For lack of artillery support the enemy's fire from that direction could not be neutralised, though our machine-guns struggled manfully at the task. This enfilade fire was particularly effective since our men, firing over the parados, were not protected by the traverses.

Finding his attacks over the open overwhelmed by our fire the enemy commenced to develop bombing attacks down his numerous communication trenches. Here the advantage lay entirely with him. He had proper grenades, automatically lighted and unaffected to any great extent by wet and mud.

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Our bombs consisted of charges of gun-cotton in 1 lb. jam tins, with a few inches of safety fuse connected to a detonator. In order to light the fuse one had to cut it so as to expose the core. Against the core had to be held the head of a match, which was ignited by striking it with the match-box, held in the other hand. This worked well in dry weather, but in the rain and slimy mud that prevailed then it was almost impossible to keep either the matches or the match-boxes dry and fit for use. A dozen matches would have to be tried before one could be found to ignite the fuse. The enemy's bombing attacks, too, were supported very effectively by trench-mortar fire.

As the day wore on and the enemy's enfilade fire and counter-attacks increased in violence and effect, so our fire weakened. Our casualties were mounting up, and the mud was rendering more and more rifles useless. It became clear that complete disaster was not far distant. It was decided to report the situation and to beg for artillery support for the defence.

The telephone wires had long since been cut by the enemy's fire, however. The ground between the captured trenches and our own front line was swept by machine-gun and close rifle fire, while owing to the mud and ditches movement over it could be at a snail's pace only. Visual signalling under the intense fire was impossible.

In these circumstances Captain M. T. Cramer-Roberts volunteered to carry the message. By a miracle, under a hail of bullets, he all but won through unhurt. He reached our front line, but as he poised for the jump into the trench a burst of machine-gun fire caught him, shattering three of his limbs.

Never again was this gallant officer able to serve with the Regiment. But his task was done; the British guns opened with their few remaining shells, and the worst of the pressure on our harassed companies was relieved. They were able to hold on until dark.

For his gallant act Captain Cramer-Roberts was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, and never had a decoration been more worthily won.

Soon after darkness had fallen — that is, about 5 P.M.—orders were received to withdraw from the captured trenches, " the objects of the attack having been attained and the enemy reserves effectually held on the Indian Corps front during the critical hours of the French assault."

The withdrawal was skilfully carried out without the enemy's knowledge and with little or no loss. " A " and " B " Companies assembled in sub-sector reserve in the houses along the road Le Plantin-Festubert.

The remainder of the night was spent in reorganisation. There was much to be done. Expended ammunition had to be replaced, every round being carried up to the trenches by hand through the deep mud, rifles had to be cleaned and made serviceable, and the men had to be fed. There had been no leisure for eating since the previous evening. Everyone worked through the night, and few had time to wonder what the daylight might bring.

Unfortunately one of the measures of reorganisation was the movement of the company reserve platoons from the support trench into the front-line trench, thus leaving the support trench entirely

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unguarded, while the two Battalion machine-guns, having been engaged heavily all the previous day, were withdrawn into reserve for an overhaul.

At daybreak on the 20th December the companies "stood to" as usual. Rather exceptional activity in the enemy's trenches was noticed and reported, but it was attributed to normal reorganisation following the re-occupation of their line. The "stand to" was prolonged for an hour, but at 8.30 A.M. the troops "stood down" for breakfasts, the first hot tea that the Left Wing had been able to make for two days.

Such was the situation when the blow fell.

At exactly 9 A.M. the enemy exploded no less than ten mines under the trenches held by the Sirhind Brigade. As the explosions rent the air the enemy swarmed out of his trenches in massed attack supported by heavy artillery fire on the road Le Plantin-Festubert and our reserve area.

The effect of the mines was devastating. Of course every man in the immediate vicinity of an exploded mine was killed, and in addition every man within about fifty yards of a mine was knocked down senseless or dazed. Through the gaps so formed moved the enemy's storming troops, each leader carrying a long staff with a board attached on which was painted a black German eagle.

The leading enemy troops pushed straight through our front-line trenches into the support trench and into Givenchy village, and from these vantage points supported by fire the attacks of their following parties. These, on reaching the gaps in the front line, turned right and left and attacked the still dazed and sur-

prised garrison with bombs. The enemy's enfilade fire from the commanding position of Givenchy was most effective.

The enemy's flank bombing attacks carried all before them. The bombing parties were excellently organised; they carried grenades that were unaffected by wet and mud, and they were supported on each flank by the fire of their friends. Moreover, their progress was marked by the eagle standards, so that their friends were never in doubt as to their exact positions.

Where the shock of the mines had been less violent a desperate resistance was maintained, and for a time the enemy troops who tried to storm the trenches over the open were completely checked. Captain A. M. Rundall was early killed in a gallant attempt to stay the enemy's progress by a counter-attack over the open. Captain R. C. B. Yates had been killed by one of the mines.

The artillery could do little. As soon as the enemy's attack started our guns opened fire, and did what they could to help the defence. They punished the enemy's reserves heavily, but as they dared not fire too near to our trenches they were unable greatly to influence the fighting in them. Captain M. Wylie, commanding our machine-guns, hurried them forward in the hope of gaining Givenchy and from there enfilading the enemy attack. Ploughing its way forward, however, the detachment came under unexpected fire from the village, and was driven to cover in a communication trench. As the heavily laden men moved along the trench they were suddenly attacked by the enemy in our support trench and

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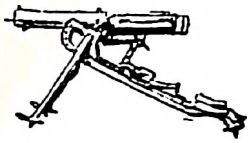

overwhelmed before they could make any effort to defend themselves. Captain Wylie was knocked senseless by a blow with a rifle, and he and most of his men were taken prisoners.

In the meanwhile the reserve companies ("C" and "D") had been ordered to occupy and to hold the reserve trenches.

In the front trench the situation was now past hope. Driven in on both flanks, the survivors of the garrison found themselves crowded into a hundred yards' length of trench at the head of one communication trench. This was held by the enemy farther back at its junction with our support line. A surrender seemed to be inevitable when a most dashing counter-attack was organised down the communication trench. The junction was captured and held long enough for the remainder of the troops in the front line to withdraw, which they did supported by the fire of the reserve companies.

For the time being the enemy halted to consolidate his gains and to complete the conquest of the remainder of the Brigade line, the fight for which continued, on the left, to rage for some hours more.

At dusk, about 4.30 P.M., the enemy attack was renewed, being now directed against the reserve trenches. Supported by heavy artillery fire the enemy's infantry swarmed forward, laboriously making their way through the deep mud. Their shells set fire to the numerous straw stacks and to several buildings, and the red glare of the flames lighted the battlefield. Our guns now had no fear of hitting their friends, and British shrapnel swept lanes of dead and wounded through the attacking masses. Watch-

ing, we felt glad that we ourselves were under the fire of German and not British guns. The German shrapnel, bursting high in the air, was almost harmless in comparison with that of the British, which was bursting beautifully a few feet from the ground or on graze. In this case it was almost unnecessary for us to use our rifles. The artillery did all that was required.

Later in the night regiments of the Corps Cavalry, dismounted, and battalions of the Jullundur and Ferozepore Brigades of the Lahore Division were launched in desperate, and unfortunately useless, counter-attacks. Arriving in the dark, unaware of the situation, these troops did what men could do. It was a useless sacrifice of brave lives, however. Even by day it was almost impossible, owing to the mud with which everyone was caked, to distinguish friend from foe except at very close range. In the dark the inevitable confusion led to friend fighting friend, loss of direction, loss of control, and dreadful casualties. A composite force (two dismounted squadrons 8th Hussars, the Jodhpore Lancers, 47th Sikhs, and 2/8th Gurkhas), under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel A. Grant (then in command of the 2/8th Gurkhas and until early in 1914 commandant of the 2/4th Gurkhas), did succeed during the night in recapturing our lost support trenches, but the ground could not be held, and had to be evacuated at dawn owing to the enfilade fire from Givenchy.

The latter village was, on the 21st, recaptured and held by the 1st Manchester Regiment. A brilliant counter-attack.

On the 21st the 1st (British) Division arrived in the area. It continued the counter-attacks and

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recaptured and held our lost support trench, though farther south it was unable to gain any ground.

On the 23rd the Sirhind Brigade was relieved by troops of the 1st Division, and moved back to rest in the Auchel area. The men were suffering badly from trench feet before the German attack. Owing to lack of labour the reserve trenches were worse than the forward trenches. They were just ditches full of water. In this water, waist-deep, we had to stand during most of the 20th and the whole of the 21st. Men sank slowly into the mud at the bottom, and in order to get a firm footing they collected mangold-wurzels and stamped them into the mud. From time to time these mangold-wurzels bobbed up through the water and hit one on the back. To those who were present the sight of the mangold-wurzel still brings back to mind those cold hours spent in the reserve trenches before Le Plantin. The effect of the long immersion on the feet was very severe. They swelled, turned a greenish-white colour, and became very painful. To walk was an agony. During the march to Auchel we looked like a battalion of cripples. It took us six hours to cover nine miles.

The Battalion casualties from the 17th to the 23rd December, both days inclusive, had been as follows :—

Killed.—Captains R. C. B. Yates, D. Inglis, and A. M. Rundall; Jemadar Lachman Thapa, and 134 Gurkha other ranks.

Wounded.—Major B. U. Nicolay, Captain M. T. Cramer-Roberts, and 35 Gurkha other ranks.

Prisoners of War.—Captain M. Wylie, Subadar-Major Shersing Rana, Subadars Premsing Thapa and Prithising Gurung, Jemadar Nainsing Gurung, and 47 Gurkha other ranks.

For its services in the battle the Regiment was awarded the Battle Honour " Givenchy 1914."

Givenchy, 1914

The following individual awards were made :—

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER.

Captain M. T. Cramer-Roberts.

INDIAN ORDER OF MERIT.

No. 4252 Naik Dewansing Gurung.
No. 4609 Rifleman Parbir Gurung.

CHAPTER IX.

1ST BATTALION.

Neuve Chapelle

DURING January and February 1915 the Battalion served several tours of duty in the line in the vicinity of Neuve Chapelle and the Rue du Bois.

The country was at this time too water-logged for trenches to be used. In their place the line was held by a number of detached posts defended by breastworks, known as "grouse butts." Conditions were the same for the enemy, and no active operations were undertaken by either side. There was much sniping, but little else. All the defences were based on the villages and farms scattered about the countryside, while the posts mentioned above were held as outposts in front of the main line. Thus the troops were able to live for the most part among the ruined houses, and suffered no hardships to be compared with those of December 1914.

When not in the line the Battalion was resting at Auchel, where it received various reinforcements from time to time. The following officers joined the Battalion at this time :—

Major D. C. Young, 2/4th Gurkhas.
Capt. Rombulow-Pearse, 2/6th Gurkhas.
Capt. C. M. T. Hogg, 2/4th Gurkhas.
Lieut. A. D. D. Carter, 2/4th Gurkhas.

With these officers came a reinforcement of 3 Gurkha officers and 241 rank and file.

Colonel Walker was appointed as permanent G.O.C. Sirhind Brigade, having been officiating in that appointment for some time; since Major Travers had been transferred sick to England the command of the Battalion devolved upon Major D. C. Young. On the 21st January, Lieutenant J. R. Hartwell rejoined the Battalion from the 2/8th Gurkhas, and took over the Adjutancy from that date.

Towards the end of January the Battalion received the following as reinforcements :—

Capt. W. A. Gardiner, 2/4th Gurkhas,
Lieut. C. F. F. Moore, 123rd Outram's Rifles,

together with 1 Gurkha officer and 67 rank and file of the 2/4th Gurkhas.

On the 9th February the Battalion was joined by Captain M'Gann, 69th Punjabis, and a first draft of the Burma Military Police; also 1 Gurkha officer and 83 rank and file of the 2/4th Gurkhas.

During the whole time that the Battalion was in France the question of reinforcements for Gurkha battalions was one of great difficulty. The authorised strength of the Gurkha reserve before the War was one hundred per battalion. When the reserves were called up a proportion had to be rejected on medical grounds, and a few did not rejoin. The reserve may have produced as many as sixty men per battalion, but it is doubtful. News spreads slowly in Nepal, and it was long before these trained reinforcements became available. Beyond them there was nothing at all except the Burma and Assam police.

Neuve Chapelle

Rather a point has been made of this lack of reinforcements, for it affected us very much. The Battalion had left Bakloh at war strength, 736 of all ranks. The first ten per cent reinforcement had preceded it to Marseilles and had been absorbed into the Gurkha battalions which had proceeded direct to France. As a result the Battalion strength when it took over the trenches on 17th December was about 650 of all ranks. In the heavy fighting north of Givenchy the Battalion suffered casualties, as stated in the previous chapter. In February 1915, when it took over trenches in the Rue du Bois from a battalion of the 4th Guards Brigade, it had a total strength of 450 combatants. We with 450 had to hold the same defences as our predecessors, who were 1200 strong! All the Indian troops fought their battles and actions in France with a strength greatly below their rather meagre war establishments.

The last weeks of February 1915 found the British and German armies in France and Belgium facing each other on the general line Givenchy, Neuve Chapelle, Armentières, Ypres. The worst of the winter was over, and the British army had replaced the great losses in men that it had suffered in 1914. What were then thought to be very large reserves of ammunition had also been collected.

The great German attack on the British and French armies in 1914 on the front Givenchy-Ypres had, in the end, been checked. The Germans had, however, succeeded in pushing the British off the long low ridge called Aubers Ridge which runs from near La Bassée, past the east of Neuve Chapelle, through

Aubers, to the north of Armentières. The result was that the battle left the Germans on fairly high, and therefore dry, ground, while the British wallowed in the water-logged ground at the foot of the ridge. This state of affairs gave the Germans another great advantage—namely, good artillery observation over the British line and back areas. The British artillery, on the other hand, had the greatest difficulty in observing even the German front trenches. Sir John French, therefore, decided that the British First Army should attack and capture the high ground of the Aubers Ridge as a preliminary to a further advance eastwards.

During the fighting of 1914 the Germans had advanced beyond the Aubers Ridge and had captured the village of Neuve Chapelle. Now, in 1915, this village, together with the Bois du Biez, close to it on the south-east, formed a salient or bastion pushed forward from the general German line into the British area. Any British advance to the north or south of Neuve Chapelle could be taken in flank from this bastion, either by fire or by counter-attack.

Sir Douglas Haig, commanding the First Army, therefore decided first to attack and capture Neuve Chapelle and the Bois du Biez and then to push on and capture the Aubers Ridge, the attack to commence as soon as possible after the 9th March.

The German defences of Neuve Chapelle consisted of a very well wired front-line breastwork and trench, a support trench that was unwired and in a very poor condition, and an incomplete trench that ran along the north-west edge of the Bois du Biez and thence north-east towards the village of Aubers.

Neuve Chapelle

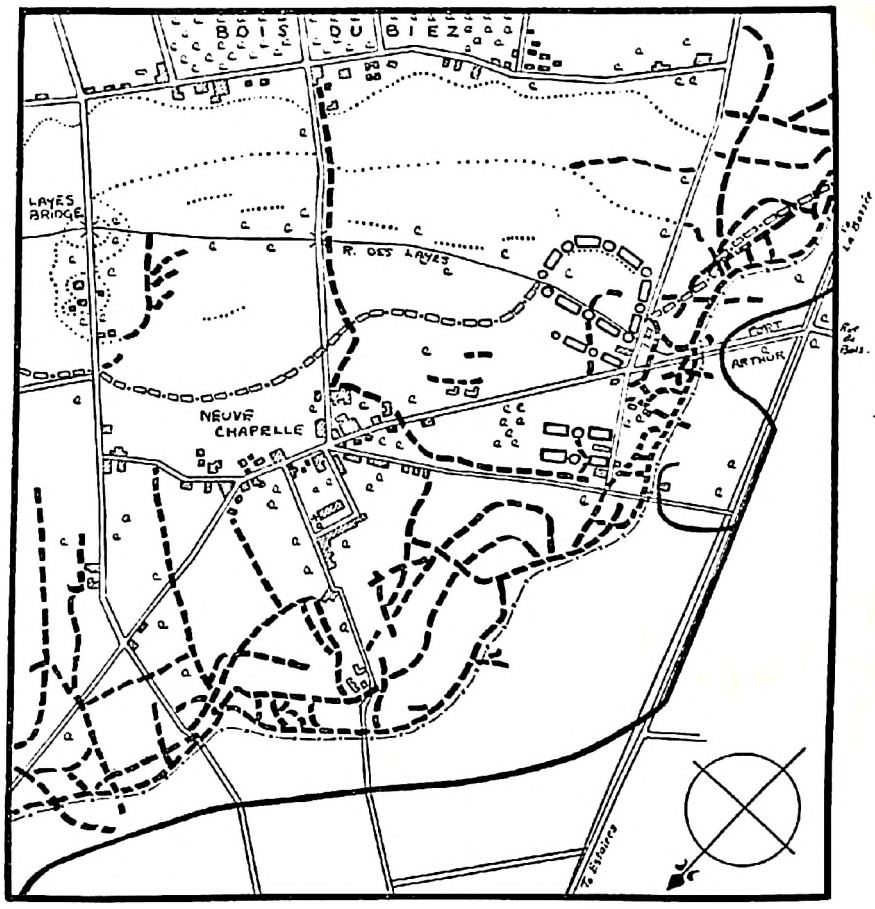
The wire protecting the front-line trench was a formidable obstacle, consisting of several rows of barbed wire on wooden supports. These supports took the form of horizontal beams twenty-five to thirty feet long, with cross-pieces at either end of each beam. The wire was stretched between the supports. Each support, or " knife rest " as it was called, was joined by wire to its neighbour and anchored to the ground.

To have charged this wire before it was cut would have meant the slaughter of the attacking troops and miserable failure, so it had been decided to destroy it by means of a heavy artillery bombardment. To cover the attack, which was to be on a front of three thousand yards, there were accordingly assembled behind the British lines sixty 13-pounder guns, three hundred and twenty-four 18-pounder guns, fifty 4.5 howitzers, and forty-eight heavy guns and howitzers.

By the evening of the 9th March, on which day rain mixed with some snow had fallen steadily all day until about sunset, all the troops were in position ready for the great attack, which was to commence on the 10th. The initial attack had been entrusted to the Indian Corps on the right and the IV. Corps on the left. These two corps were to storm the German trenches west of Neuve Chapelle ; to take the village in the first rush ; to push on to the east edge of the Bois du Biez ; and finally to advance on to the Aubers Ridge and defeat the reserves of the German Sixth Army.

On the Indian Corps front of attack, from the Rue du Bois to near Pont Logy, the British line was

NEUVE CHAPELLE



YARDS 500 400 300 200 100 0 500 YARDS

ORIGINAL BRITISH FRONT LINE

GERMAN TRENCHES DUG BEFORE 10TH MARCH

" " " AFTER " "

BRITISH LINE REACHED ON 13TH MARCH

4TH GURKHAS' POSITIONS

Neuve Chapelle

held by the Bareilly Brigade; on the IV. Corps front, from Pont Logy to Moated Grange, by the 24th Brigade. The Sirhind Brigade, together with the Jullundur Brigade, was in Corps reserve near Calonne. The Ferozepore Brigade was farther in rear in Army reserve.

At 6 A.M. on the 10th March the Sirhind Brigade marched from Calonne. As it approached La Couture at 7.30 A.M. the massed British guns opened with a great crash. The battle had started.

The Brigade marched as far as Vieille Chapelle and La Couture, and remained there in reserve until the following night.

Although the Battalion took no part in the fighting of the 10th and 11th, some description is necessary of the events of those two days.

When day broke on the 10th March a thick mist lay over the whole countryside. This dispersed gradually, however, and by the time the attack was due to start the day was fairly clear and bright. At 8.5 A.M., after an intensive artillery bombardment of the enemy's wire, front line, and support line, the three assaulting brigades, the 23rd, 25th, and the Garhwal Brigade, charged forward into the German trenches. Except on its two extreme flanks the British assault carried all before it. Before the surprised and dazed Germans could man their defences the British were upon them, and such of the enemy as did not run away or surrender were bayoneted. Having taken the enemy line, the attackers swept on towards Neuve Chapelle, and by 9 A.M. all battalions of the Garhwal and 25th

Brigades had reached their objectives, the line of the old 1914 British trenches about two hundred yards east of Neuve Chapelle, and had started to consolidate them. Before the British, almost undefended, lay the Bois du Biez and the Aubers Ridge, to gain which the battle was being fought. The two supporting British brigades were moving forward. Had they been pushed boldly forward the Aubers Ridge would have been captured with little or no further fighting. It was a great opportunity.

On the flanks of the British break through, however, two small but gallant parties of the enemy were still holding out, and unfortunately the energies of the two supporting British brigades were diverted from their original objectives to subdue these centres of resistance. The Germans put up a splendid fight, and one of these posts was not captured until five in the afternoon, by which time fresh German reserves had been hurried to the defence of the ridge.

It was not until 5.15 P.M. that an attack was launched against the Bois du Biez. By that time it was quite dark, but some houses burning on the edge of the wood gave the direction. The 2/2nd Gurkhas and the 1/9th Gurkhas, both of the Dehra Dun Brigade of the Meerut Division, advanced through Neuve Chapelle to the Layes stream. They crossed the stream by means of foot-bridges which they had brought with them and eventually, at about 6.30 P.M., reached the south-west edge of the Bois and began to consolidate it. About half an hour earlier two battalions of the enemy had entered the wood from the other side. At about 7 P.M. a Gurkha

patrol came into contact with the enemy and captured a prisoner. This man, more cunning than truthful, stated that two German regiments, that is six battalions, had arrived and were forming up in the wood for counter-attack, and his statement was passed back to Brigade Headquarters. Since the attack by the 24th Brigade on the left had been held up the two Gurkha battalions were unsupported on either flank, and for this and other reasons it was decided to withdraw them from the wood. By 9 P.M. they had withdrawn to the Layes stream and commenced to consolidate its south bank, whereupon the two German battalions in the Bois du Biez advanced and occupied the north-west edge of the wood.

The Germans spent the night 10th/11th in consolidating their new positions. Before dawn on the 11th they had dug and wired a continuous trench from the Lorgies road, past the north-west edge of the Bois du Biez and about half-way between the latter and Neuve Chapelle, to just north-west of Layes Bridge, and thence on to Mauquissart.

When day broke on the 11th a heavy mist lay over the battlefield. This rendered proper artillery support for attacking infantry very difficult, in fact almost impossible. The main difficulty lay in discovering and describing exactly where the enemy trenches were sited. The enemy's strong-point at Layes Bridge was known only too well to the British troops in its vicinity ; it held at least fifteen machine-guns. But some houses and trees west and north-west of it hid it so well that the British guns were never able effectively to range on it. The German

artillery, on the other hand, had registered the British positions and the roads leading to them on the day before, and its fire was accordingly very effective.

Twice on the 11th the British launched big attacks. On each occasion the order was given that the attack should take place "by the left." On each occasion the left brigades were completely held up by the very heavy rifle and machine-gun fire, and the attacks therefore broke down. Darkness fell on this, the second day of the battle, with the British line where it had been the evening before.

All this time the Sirhind Brigade had been waiting at Vieille Chapelle and La Couture. During the night 11th/12th it was ordered forward to Neuve Chapelle to relieve the Dehra Dun Brigade and to attack the Bois du Biez on the morning of the 12th. Its attack was to be made in co-operation with the Jullundur Brigade, which was to attack on the left of Sirhind.

The intention of Brigadier-General W. G. Walker, V.C., commanding the Sirhind Brigade, was that the Highland Light Infantry (right) and the 1/4th Gurkhas (left) should relieve the 1/9th Gurkhas and the 2/2nd Gurkhas respectively in their trenches along the south bank of the Layes stream; that the 1/1st Gurkhas and the 15th Sikhs should form up behind the Highland Light Infantry and the 1/4th Gurkhas respectively; and that the 4th King's should be in Brigade reserve. Soon after dawn on the 12th March the 1/1st Gurkhas and the 15th Sikhs were to attack and to capture the north-west edge of the Bois du Biez. The Highland Light Infantry and the 1/4th Gurkhas were to follow these two battalions,

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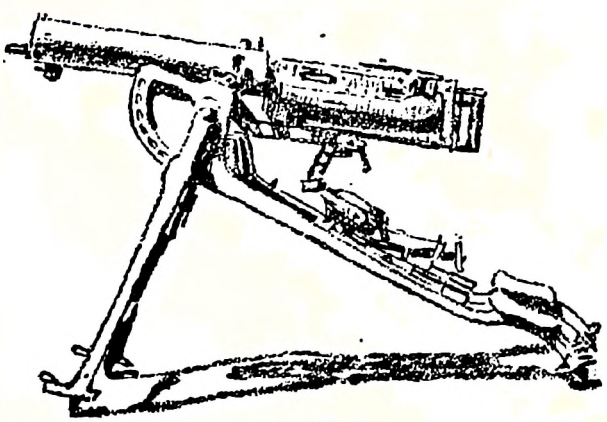
to pass through them on their objective, and to capture the south-east edge of the wood. The 4th King's were to "mop up" the wood and the buildings round it.

The Battalion left Vieille Chapelle about 9 P.M. on the 11th March with the rest of the Sirhind Brigade and moved slowly towards Neuve Chapelle. The night was very dark, and the masses of other troops and transport made progress very slow. The Brigade was just passing Lansdowne Post, about a mile north-east of Pont Logy, when the enemy opened a heavy bombardment of that area. Fortunately the Brigade kept steadily on, and the battalions not only kept touch with each other but suffered very few casualties.

Soon after dark this day occurred an event fraught with disaster for the morrow. The Dehra Dun Brigade decided to withdraw the 2/2nd and the 1/9th Gurkhas from their trenches along the south bank of the Layes stream. An officer from the Sirhind Brigade had been sent forward to Neuve Chapelle to arrange the details of the relief with the Dehra Dun Brigade. This officer protested against the decision to abandon the trenches along the Layes. He pointed out that in the morning the Sirhind Brigade was to attack the Bois du Biez, and that a withdrawal this night from the trenches along the Layes would seriously compromise the attack. He begged that Brigadier-General Walker should be consulted before action was taken upon the decision.



The commander on the spot, however, insisted that the trenches must be evacuated at once, and proceeded to carry out his decision before the arrival of the Sirhind Brigade. As the latter Brigade crossed the old British trenches it met the first of the 2/2nd and 1/9th Gurkhas moving back. In the dark, on the narrow and ditch-bound road, among shell-holes, trenches, and wire, a most appalling confusion resulted. This was increased by the steady bombardment of the area by the enemy. Somehow the Sirhind Brigade won through, and this confusion proved to be but one of the minor evils that resulted from the unfortunate evacuation of the Layes trenches.

When the 1/4th Gurkhas reached the junction of Edgware Road and the Lorgies Road the Battalion was directed to wheel to the south-east and to occupy an area north of the latter road. "A" Company squeezed itself into the front-line trenches of the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment, along the north bank of the Layes stream and some four to five hundred yards south of Neuve Chapelle. "B" Company occupied a support trench some hundred yards in rear of "A" Company. "C" and "D" Companies dug themselves in still farther in the rear. It will be noted that the Brigadier-General's plan had already been modified. The Highland Light Infantry and the 1/4th Gurkhas had changed places.

The Highland Light Infantry took over trenches with their left resting in Neuve Chapelle, some two hundred yards north-west of the Layes stream. The other battalions, the 1/1st Gurkhas behind the 1/4th Gurkhas and the 15th Sikhs behind the Highland

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Light Infantry, found places for themselves still farther in rear. The 4th King's halted in the old German trenches opposite Port Arthur. Before dawn the Jullundur Brigade moved up into Neuve Chapelle ready to attack on the left of the Sirhind Brigade.

The attack was to open with an intense artillery bombardment of the defences of the Bois du Biez from 7 A.M. until 7.20 A.M. At the latter time the 1/4th Gurkhas and the Highland Light Infantry were to advance and to storm the north-west edge of the Bois; the 1/1st Gurkhas and the 15th Sikhs were to pass through the leading battalions on their objective and to storm the south-east edge of the wood.[1]

The delays of the 10th and 11th had, however, allowed the enemy to bring up strong reserves. On the 11th two battalions had held the Bois du Biez. During the night of the 11th/12th four more battalions, two Bavarian and two Saxon, reached the same area. In addition, the 6th Bavarian Division had reached the battlefield. While the Sirhind Brigade had been moving up to Neuve Chapelle these German reserves had been forming up for a great counter-attack.

When day broke on the 12th the countryside was covered with a thick white mist. Even as Major D. C. Young, temporarily commanding the Battalion, was peering into the mist and trying to determine the direction of the Bois du Biez in order that he might issue the attack orders, the steady enemy artillery fire crashed out into an intense bombardment. Fortunately the German shells missed our trenches for

[1] A reversal of the original plan. See page 200.

the most part and fell in rear of "C" and "D" Company areas. At 5 A.M. the enemy guns lifted. A moment later the swirling mist and smoke was alive with German infantry, the leading men not sixty yards from our front trench. The whole British front-line trench burst into flame as every rifle and machine-gun opened on to the German masses. The leading troops melted away under our fire, but more followed, and still more. Practically no covering fire was striking our trenches, so every man could fire as fast as he could get the rounds off. In a few minutes it was all over. The great counter-attack had been beaten off with heavy slaughter along the whole British front. In this counter-attack the enemy's losses were extremely heavy. It was estimated that three thousand dead and wounded lay on the Indian Corps front, Port Arthur to Neuve Chapelle. They lay there until dark, when most of the wounded were removed, by the Germans or ourselves, leaving some five hundred dead to pollute the air for weeks.

A British attack launched immediately after the failure of this counter-attack would probably have swept all before it. Every bit of cover in front was full of demoralised Germans, who, it is likely, would have surrendered at once had the British advanced. But such things can seldom be done. Thrust into the area at night, our battalions had small idea where they were, while Brigade Headquarters was by no means sure of the exact location of its troops. In addition to this, the British guns had opened fire all along the line. To have advanced would have meant running into their shells. Unlike an arranged

attack, the infantry had no idea when their guns would lift or cease fire, and the mist made observation by the gunners impossible. Besides, the British attack was to have been launched at 7 A.M., and as soon as the counter-attack had died down everyone busied himself with preparations for that attack. In firing on the German counter-attack, however, our artillery had expended much ammunition. This had to be replaced. The heavy mist, too, blinded the gunners, and they had not yet been able to register with sufficient accuracy to justify fire in close support of attacking infantry. The British attack was, therefore, postponed until 11 A.M.

At 10.30 A.M. the British guns opened an intensive fire on the south-western edge of the Bois du Biez. The mist had not yet entirely cleared, and even by this hour registration had not been carried out to the satisfaction of the artillery commanders. It is doubtful whether this bombardment was very effective. However that may have been, just as the 1/4th Gurkhas were about to move forward orders arrived postponing the attack until 1 P.M. The advance was therefore stopped.

About three hundred yards in front of the front line of "A" Company was the trench on the south bank of the Layes stream which had been evacuated by the Dehra Dun Brigade during the night. This was now held by the Germans. At about mid-day Subadar Durgia, of "A" Company, noticed that the enemy in this trench seemed to be demoralised. He drew the attention of Captain L. P. Collins, commanding the Right Wing, to this. The latter authorised an immediate attack by "A" and "B"

companies. Led by Subadar Durgia, " A " Company, followed by " B," charged forward under a heavy fire from that and other trenches and stormed the trench, killing a large number of Germans and capturing a hundred and twenty prisoners. Unfortunately the gallant Subadar was killed in the charge, just as he entered the enemy trench.

For his initiative and gallantry on this and other occasions Captain Collins was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

At 12.30 P.M. the British guns reopened their intensive fire. On the Sirhind Brigade front the fire certainly was effective. For a while it looked as if the attack would be successful on this front. On the left the Highland Light Infantry dashed forward carrying all before them until they reached the Layes stream. There they found that the foot-bridges used by the Dehra Dun Brigade on the 11th had been pulled away by the Germans after their counter-attack. Just at this moment the full blast of the enemy's enfilade machine-gun fire from Layes Bridge struck the Battalion. The troops were faced by the ten-foot wide Layes. It was three or four feet deep and had banks another three or four feet above the water level. The men jumped into the stream and painfully tried to climb out the other side up the slimy bank. As they struggled in the stream the enemy machine-guns swept the obstacle. Held there under such fire the Battalion melted away, until the Layes stream was choked with dead and dying. The gallant Highland Light Infantry could make no further progress.

In the meanwhile, during the bombardment the

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1/4th Gurkhas had formed up and had advanced to the Layes. The attack by Captain Collins and Subadar Durgia had prevented the enemy from removing the bridges. All was ready and favourable for an advance. The attack, however, had been ordered to move " by the left," and so, when the left halted, the Battalion halted also.

In order to understand the action it is necessary to know what was happening at the Sirhind Brigade Headquarters all this time. The Brigade Commander was in a house in Neuve Chapelle, but temporarily he no longer commanded the Sirhind Brigade. Brigadier-General Walker had been placed in command of both the Sirhind and Jullundur Brigades. Therefore, taking with him his staff and signal section, he turned the Sirhind Brigade Headquarters into a temporary Divisional Headquarters. Lieutenant-Colonel W. C. Anderson, 1/1st Gurkhas, the senior Battalion Commander, was appointed to command the Sirhind Brigade. Lieutenant-Colonel Anderson took with him his adjutant and the 1/1st Gurkhas' signallers to act as his brigade major and brigade signal section respectively. Command of the 1/1st Gurkhas devolved upon the senior company commander, who had to exercise command without an adjutant and without signallers. Except to note the lesson we are not concerned with the unfortunate effect that this had on the fortunes of the 1/1st Gurkhas. We will consider the effect it had on the command of the Brigade and on the operations of the 1/4th Gurkhas.

The area of attack was under a heavy hostile

artillery bombardment. It was also swept by accurate rifle and machine-gun fire. The mist, not so thick now as it had been in the early morning but still fairly thick, the smoke, the trees and houses, all made observation difficult. The intercommunication system within the Brigade had been destroyed. Both the permanent and temporary commanders of the Sirhind Brigade had to trust for information on what they could see, which was little enough, and on what they could hear, which was a great deal too much.

The reason for the failure of the Highland Light Infantry to advance was obvious enough. That the 1/4th Gurkha Rifles also were not advancing gradually became known to Brigadier-General Walker. What he did not know was the reason for the failure to advance. Assuming that it was due to enemy opposition, Brigadier-General Walker ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Anderson to send forward the 1/1st Gurkhas to help the 1/4th Gurkhas. It was nearly 2 P.M. before this order reached Lieutenant-Colonel Anderson. He, being nearer to the 1/4th Gurkhas, had already guessed something of the true reason of the failure to advance. Before the order from Brigadier-General Walker had reached him he had sent forward Captain G. S. Kennedy, Adjutant 1/1st Gurkhas and acting Brigade Major, to find out the reasons for the hesitation and to order an immediate advance. Unfortunately Captain Kennedy was killed before he could reach the 1/4th Gurkhas.

Waiting for the effect of the order sent through Captain Kennedy, Lieutenant-Colonel Anderson delayed the order to the 1/1st Gurkhas. He was

hoping that the advance of the 1/4th would show him on which flank the advance of the 1/1st would be the more effective. As nothing happened, at last, at 2.30 P.M., he ordered the 1/1st forward to attack on the left of the 1/4th.

It was not until 5 P.M. that the 1/1st Gurkhas, who had drawn heavy enemy artillery and machine-gun fire as soon as they moved, reached the line of the Layes stream. The fire of the British guns had by then ceased, the enemy had regained confidence, and the attempts of the 1/1st Gurkhas to cross the stream were checked by intense fire. The acting commanding officer of the Battalion had been hit very soon after the advance had begun, and a shell had knocked out most of the Battalion Headquarters, including the few signallers who had been left with the Battalion. On reaching the Layes, too, the 1/1st Gurkhas found that, as in front of the Highland Light Infantry, the foot-bridges had been removed.

The 1/4th Gurkhas, on seeing the forward movement of the 1/1st, attempted to advance, but the effort was met with such a storm of fire that it faded away almost at once.

Farther to the north the attacks of the Jullundur and 24th Brigades had withered away under the enemy fire from Layes Bridge and the trenches along the Layes stream. No progress had been made.

The British attack on the 12th, therefore, had failed as had those on the 11th, and the British line remained substantially where it had been on the evening of the 10th.

The defending enemy were now on the battlefield in greater strength than the British. During the

three days of the battle the British artillery had fired over 112,000 shells, while the expenditure of small arms ammunition approximated to three million rounds. Expenditure at this rate could not be maintained at that period of the war.[1] Sir Douglas Haig, therefore, decided to bring the attack to an end, and ordered the troops to consolidate the ground already won. The Germans also were completely exhausted. In their counter-attack on the 12th they had lost enormously. They too, therefore, accepted the situation, and confined their activities to consolidating their new line.

After the failure of the mid-day attack on the 12th a man of the Leicestershire Regiment was seen lying wounded to the left front of the trenches held by "A" Company. He had been lying there since the 10th. He was exposed to the enemy fire and was calling for help. Major D. C. Young, acting in command of the Battalion, decided to bring this man under cover himself. Followed by No. 4578 Rifleman Wazir Sing Burathoki and No. 4015 Rifleman Khamba Sing Gurung, Major Young rushed out to the wounded man. All three were shot down at once, Major Young being killed. Captain C. M. T. Hogg, 1/4th Gurkhas, and Captain H. H. M'Gann, 69th Punjabis (attached 1/4th Gurkhas), Jemadar Gunjabir Gurung, and Private W. Buckingham, the Leicestershire Regiment, at once ran out to bring their comrades into safety. All were hit before they could effect anything. Proper

[1] It was small when compared with the expenditure later. During one day of the Battle of the Somme in 1916, on a front of twenty miles, the British expenditure amounted to 500,000 shells.

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covering fire on to the enemy was then organised, and the wounded Leicestershire man and our own casualties were brought in without further loss.

For their gallantry on this occasion Jemadar Gunjabir Gurung, Rifleman Wazir Sing Burathoki, and Rifleman Khamba Sing Gurung were each awarded the Indian Order of Merit, and Private Buckingham received the Victoria Cross. Rifleman Wazir Sing Burathoki was also later awarded the Russian decoration of the Cross of St George.

During the night of the 12th-13th March the Sirhind Brigade relieved the Garhwal Brigade in the defence of the new British line from exclusive Port Arthur on the right to inclusive Neuve Chapelle on the left. The Battalion held the centre sector of this line.

The Sirhind Brigade remained in this line until the 20th March 1915. During this period, 13th to 20th March, the enemy guns were most active and gave us a very bad time. Our own guns, being short of ammunition, could make no effective reply. Not that a reply would have helped us much. An artillery duel usually takes the form of each artillery pounding the infantry of its opposite number. Still, one does like to see others getting what one is getting oneself. Even to see one's own Brigade, or better Divisional, Headquarters getting a dusting for a change is not exactly depressing !

This period in the line, too, was one of more than usually frequent patrol encounters. Both we and the Germans had much trench digging and wiring to do, and our covering parties and patrols often clashed. Fortunately it was generally true

of these encounters that the expenditure of Vérey lights and ammunition was quite out of proportion to the casualties inflicted.

One of the most serious of these occurred when the enemy was suspected of attempting to push forward his line by consolidating a length of trench that his counter-attacking troops had dug on the 12th and later abandoned. During the night 17th-18th March a patrol of six men under No. 4869 Lance Naik Ranbahadur Gharti was sent to find out whether the enemy were in fact working on this trench. Approaching the trench our patrol found the enemy at work. Instead of withdrawing, the patrol at once attacked the trench and drove the surprised Germans headlong out of it. Unfortunately our men were then themselves attacked in rear by a strong enemy patrol. They beat off this attack, but only at the expense of Lance Naik Ranbahadur Gharti killed and three men severely wounded, all of whom were brought in by a supporting patrol which was sent out to help the first.

Next night a working party of the 1/1st Gurkhas had the pleasant task of filling in this trench, which was only one hundred yards from the enemy's front line. Probably no operation in war is more trying to the nerves than filling in a trench under such conditions. As the enemy becomes more and more active, and as his fire and unwelcome interest in the work increases, so does the cover for the workers decrease. In the trench the 1/1st Gurkhas found eight newly killed and two wounded Germans, the handiwork of Lance Naik Ranbahadur's brave little patrol.

Neuve Chapelle

A "Gurkha" story, current at the time, the truth of which the reader may judge for himself, is too good to be lost. It is said that, some days after the battle had died down, a German officer in uniform was arrested in broad daylight in Vieille Chapelle. He explained that when the British bombardment had opened on the 10th March he had hidden in a dug-out. When the artillery fire lifted he came out of the dug-out just in time to see Indian troops appear on the parapet. He promptly went to ground again. The attack swept on, and he spent the next few days hiding in the dug-out in terror of being caught and shot as a spy. At last hunger drove him forth. Boldness being his best policy he walked down the main road into Vieille Chapelle. "Did you not meet any of our troops?" "Oh yes, lots of them; but they all were Gurkhas and they saluted me!"

On the 20th March the Sirhind Brigade was relieved by the Jullundur Brigade and moved back to rest at Calonne.

The Battalion had entered the battle of Neuve Chapelle 472 strong of all ranks. Its casualties during the battle amounted to 177, being as follows:—

Killed.—Major D. C. Young, commanding, Subadar Durgia Gurung, and 26 Gurkha other ranks.

Wounded.—Captains C. M. T. Hogg, H. H. M'Gann, 69th Punjabis (attached), Subadar Surdal Thapa, Jemadars Pahal Sing Gurung and Tularam Gurung, Assam Military Police (attached), and 144 Gurkha other ranks.

For its services in the battle the Regiment was awarded the Battle Honour "Neuve Chapelle."

The following individual awards were made for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty :—

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER.

Captain L. P. Collins.

MILITARY CROSS.

Lieutenant C. F. F. Moore, 123rd Outram's Rifles (attached).

INDIAN ORDER OF MERIT.

Jemadar Gunjabir Gurung.
No. 4015 Rifleman Khamba Sing Gurung.
No. 4578 Rifleman Wazir Sing Burathoki.

THE CROSS OF ST GEORGE, RUSSIAN.

No. 4578 Rifleman Wazir Sing Burathoki.

MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

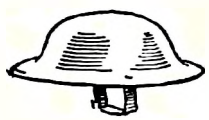
Major D. C. Young.
Captain C. M. T. Hogg.
Captain H. H. M'Gann, 69th Punjabis (attached).

The services of the Battalion were specially mentioned in Indian Corps Orders.

CHAPTER X.

1ST BATTALION.

Ypres, 1915, St Julien



AFTER the battle of Neuve Chapelle had died down, and the new British positions had been consolidated, there followed a period of ordinary trench warfare. From the Neuve Chapelle area the Sirhind Brigade moved back for a few days' rest near Calonne. That was followed by ten days in the line on the Rue du Bois, and then a return to the Calonne area.

During this period Major B. M. L. Brodhurst rejoined the Battalion from sick leave in England; Captain R. B. Phayre was appointed Brigade Machine-gun Officer, and was consequently seldom with the Battalion thereafter; Captain E. C. Lentaigne joined the Battalion from the 2nd Battalion; and Captain Rombulow-Pearse went to England sick. Of the officers who joined the Battalion from other Regiments at this period two stayed for some time thereafter—namely, Major H. B. Champain, 9th Gurkhas, to command; and Captain E. C. Kensington, 130th Baluchis.

At 5 P.M. on the 23rd April the Battalion marched from Calonne with orders to return to the Neuve Chapelle trenches during the night 23rd-24th April.

As we approached Vieille Chapelle, however, orders were received to " stand fast." An hour or so later we were told we were not to take over the Neuve Chapelle trenches, but were to bivouac for the night where we were as best we could, and to be prepared to entrain for an unknown destination early next morning.

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Rain was falling steadily. All buildings were already full of other troops, so we spent the night in the sodden fields at the side of the road. The change of orders had upset the arrangements for transport and food, so we got neither our blankets nor a hot meal. We bought what it was possible to buy from the local inhabitants, and the estaminets did a roaring trade for a time ; but the inhabitants were themselves rationed and had little to sell but beer and wine.

Still in complete ignorance regarding the reasons for these changes of orders, the Battalion fell in at 6 A.M. next morning. It was about this time that we first heard rumours of a great German attack up north near Ypres. It was said that our 2nd Army and the French had been defeated, and that our Division (Lahore) was to hurry north to assist in stemming the victorious advance of the enemy. A little later, while we still awaited definite orders, the word " gas " was heard for the first time. It was said that in their attack the enemy had used a poisonous gas that killed all who breathed it ; that no troops could withstand it ; that the enemy were employing the greatest number and the largest guns ever used in war ; that the whole British army was in danger of being cut off and surrounded.

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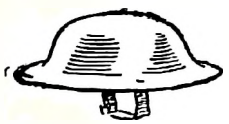

With every minute that passed the stories became more and more wild and alarming. It was obvious that they were the exaggerated inventions of frightened men, and we found ourselves disbelieving one-half and doubting the other half of them.

At 8 A.M. came the order to move. This was definite. The Lahore Division was to march to Ouderdom, near Ypres, a distance of thirty-two miles. So part at least of what we had heard was true!

There were many delays and checks, and it was not until mid-day that the Brigade joined the remainder of the Lahore Division in column of route at Lestrem and the long march to Ypres began.

No officer or man who took part in that march is likely to forget it.

In place of their Indian A.T. carts the battalions of the Division had just been equipped with L.G.S. waggons. These were driven by British Army Service Corps men, who, judging by their driving, had never before seen horses or mules, and at night, in the narrow winding roads, they were a perfect menace. A whole company had to be employed constantly in pulling ditched waggons back on to the road and in leading the animals.

Cramped after months of trench warfare, during which we had had little opportunity for practice in marching, many of the men were still suffering from the effects of trench feet and frost-bite. Marching over roads deep in mud and rutted with the passage of artillery and lorries, those thirty-two miles provided one of the finest tests of discipline that this or any other battalion has ever been asked

to face. It had been impossible to provide warm food or any but the most meagre meal before starting. All along the route, after darkness set in, the warm lights of estaminets, mostly full of troops who had given way to fatigue, tempted weary men to forget their duty, their regiment, and their heritage. At Meteren, too, owing to a badly worded order, the way was missed in the darkness and several long miles were added to the route.

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At about midnight, after marching twenty-three miles, the Battalion halted in the small village of La Manche, near the Belgian frontier. It took some time to find billets, and then to awake the men, who had fallen asleep in the road as they waited. No sooner had the men been got under cover than orders arrived to push on a further nine miles to Ouderdom in Belgium, and by dawn the Battalion was once more on the move. The men had now had no food since the beginning of the march on the previous day, so an officer rode on ahead and begged food from a British battery halted on the roadside. The gunners turned out and served out handfuls of biscuits to the men as they tramped by.

Ouderdom was reached at about 7 A.M. on the 25th April, and what was probably one of the hardest marches the Battalion had ever performed came to an end. What more need be said of those thirty-two miles? Just this: that the Battalion arrived only seven men short of the strength at which it had started, and that those seven men rejoined on foot within an hour. On the first long stretch of the march, when darkness had made it easy to slip out of the ranks unseen, an officer had "combed out" every

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estaminet passed to see if any of the men of the Battalion had joined other stragglers to find food, drink, and rest inside. He found no single one. Never has the Battalion earned more fully the praise of the G.O.C. Brigade, which was accorded them by the latter in person the next day.

Throughout the march the sound of a furious artillery fight away in the north could be heard. As the hours passed the sound grew louder and louder until, by the time Ouderdom was reached, it had become a continuous roar, and great clouds of smoke could be seen over Ypres five miles to the north-east.

During the morning of the 25th April parties of officers from all brigades, battalions, &c., of the Lahore Division rode forward through Ypres to reconnoitre the roads and the area north of St Jean-La Brique, in which the Division was to operate the next day.

Ypres and all the roads leading to it were under heavy artillery fire, and the confusion everywhere was indescribable. No one knew where were the enemy and where our own troops. One found parties of men, with and without officers, in bits of trench or ditch, facing in every direction. Every individual gave a different account of what had happened and of what was then happening. The heavy haze of smoke and gas that lay over the battlefield made map-reading most difficult for new-comers. The few troops met were themselves new to the country; they had little idea where they were and had been too busy fighting to find out. Everyone seemed to have names for the farms, &c., different from those

given by everyone else. The only names that no one had heard were those given on the map. The advanced parties returned to Ouderdom very little wiser than when they had left that place.

At this point, in order that the reader may understand the general situation better than could the reconnoitring parties mentioned above, it is necessary to go back three days, to the 22nd April, to sketch the dramatic events of that day, the occasion of the first gas attack of the War, and to give a very brief account of the three days following.

In spite of the furious German attacks of the last months of 1914 the Allied troops had held on to the country east of Ypres, entrenching themselves on the low ridge which runs in a semicircle to the south-east and east of the town and four or five miles from the town.

Just before the time of which we are writing the Allied position on this salient was held from the right (south) to the left (north) by the 27th, 28th, and Canadian Divisions of the British 2nd Army, the front trenches running just below the crest of the ridge already mentioned and west of it to one mile south of the village of Poelcapelle. Thence the line was held by the 45th Algerian and 87th Territorial Divisions of the French army, with their left resting on the canal five miles north of Ypres. From the left of the French, and holding the west bank of the canal, the 6th Belgian Division continued the line northward.

These six divisions were soon to meet the attack of ten German divisions and five independent brigades, supported by almost overwhelming artillery and by gas.

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The Germans had decided to use gas in warfare. Since the prevailing wind in Belgium and France in the early months of the year is from north to south, they considered that their new weapon could best be employed against that part of the Ypres salient which ran almost east to west—the part held by the French. They hoped to break through at this point, attack the British from the rear, and then, by advancing southward, roll up the whole British army.

Early in April all had been ready, but the wind had been unfavourable for a gas discharge, and the Germans had had to wait.

The morning of the 22nd April broke fine and calm. The 45th Algerian Division had taken over its line a few days earlier, and its guns were fairly active registering. Otherwise all was peaceful, except that the Allied aeroplanes noticed a good deal of unusual movement behind the enemy lines. Later in the morning the enemy began to shell Ypres and the roads leading into it with heavy artillery, using their great 17-inch howitzers. This fire died down later, and all was quiet again. Then suddenly, at 5 P.M., the Germans started a furious bombardment of Ypres and the villages round it. At the same time along the German trenches opposite the French appeared puffs of greenish-yellow smoke. These grew and grew and with incredible rapidity joined up into one great cloud, which, driven by the wind, rolled forward towards and over the French trenches.

The French line was not visible from the British trenches or from the back areas, and the German

bombardment was making people keep their heads down, so very few of the British saw the cloud. Those who did see it could not tell others, for the bombardment had cut all telephone communications. The French guns, however, were now roaring out in counter bombardment, and everyone knew that something serious was happening.

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Soon in the British back areas appeared parties of flying, choking, and speechless Algerians and French Territorials. "What has happened?" "What has happened?" The panic-stricken men pointed to their throats and ran on or sank gasping to the ground, unable to run farther. More and more of them came, in the wildest confusion, without arms, without hats, tearing off their equipment and flying they knew not where. Now among the soldiers were Belgian civilians; men, women, and children; cattle and carts; some carrying household goods, some empty-handed. Suddenly the French guns became silent, and soon French gunners joined the flying mob. Batteries with their guns, teams of horses without their guns, their riders flogging them forward, came hurrying back, faster and faster. Every road was blocked. Every moment the panic increased. "Sauve qui peut. L'asphyxiation!" cried the fugitives now as they dashed past.

On the whole French front of five miles, from a mile and a half east of Langemarck to the canal at Steenstraat, the defenders had fled! The road to Ypres lay open, and the whole back of the British army was at the mercy of a vigorous German advance.

By now the enemy were attacking all along the line the 27th and 28th Divisions and the Canadian

Division. The left flank of the Canadian Division, attacked in front, in flank, and in rear, was resisting with a gallantry never exceeded in war. As soon as the alarm had reached them the few Canadian reserves had fallen in and, pushing through the French fugitives, had tried to find out what had happened. Suddenly on their left flank they saw German infantry advancing rapidly. Every company turned to the left, rushed forward to the nearest cover, and opened fire. There was no line, no plan. Each company fought where it had met the enemy.

Two and a half companies of the 3rd Canadians (Battalion) found themselves defending St Julien, while two platoons of the 13th threw themselves into Keerselare and defended that place to the last man. Farther south a company of the 14th seized a group of farmhouses north of Wieltje and held them against all attacks. Only four companies on a front of two and a half miles! These gallant Canadians fought until they died, and as darkness closed down on the field of battle the German attack was gradually brought to a standstill.

The Belgians had been furiously attacked at the same time as the French and British, but no gas had been used against them and they had the wide canal on their front. They had been forced back at Het Sas and Steenstraat, but elsewhere they had held their ground.

During the night 22nd-23rd April the Canadians, with the reserves of the 28th Division on their left, established a line of sorts from the original Canadian left flank on the road Poelcapelle-St Julien to just west of St Jean, while the French dug in west of the

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canal. There was still, however, a gap of three thousand yards between the British left and the French right.

On the 23rd and 24th there was much heavy fighting. The gap between the British and French was closed, and the French crossed once more to the east bank of the canal and took over the line from the canal to the road running north from Ypres in the direction of Langemarck (henceforth to be known as Boundary Road). On the Canadian part of the line, however, the enemy launched an overwhelming attack supported by a dense cloud of gas, and, in spite of a splendid defence by the Canadians, Keerselare and St Julien were lost.

On the 25th the attack on this front was renewed, but the Canadians, together with troops of the 27th, 28th, and 50th Divisions, managed to hold their ground.

It was during this fighting of the 25th April that the officers of the Lahore Division made their somewhat unprofitable reconnaissance of the position.

During the night 25th-26th the Lahore Division received orders to march next morning to the area St Jean-La Brique, and from there to attack northwards at 1.20 P.M. The attack was to be led by the Jullundur Brigade on the right and the Ferozepore Brigade on the left, the Sirhind Brigade being in reserve at St Jean. The divisional artillery was to come into action west of the canal. There was no room for it east of the canal, even if it had been able to deploy there without being destroyed by the enemy artillery, but west of the canal, with the French between it and its infantry, at so long a range and

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with little or no effective observation, its support to the attack was of small value.

The Lahore Division marched from Ouderdom at 5.30 A.M. on the 26th April, the Jullundur and Sirhind Brigades passing through the northern edge of Ypres and the Ferozepore round the south of the town.

Ypres was being heavily shelled. The great German 17-inch shells rushed overhead with a sound like that of a runaway express train and burst with the most appalling crashes in the town, on the roads, and in the fields near-by. In the fields these shells made craters thirty feet deep and forty yards across. Their effect on the masonry buildings and pavé roads was terrific. The troops marched steadily on, taking no notice of the bombardment except when some great shell fell among them carrying death and destruction. Then there would be confusion for a moment, but the ranks would soon close up again and the march go on. In addition to the heavy artillery, 5.9 howitzers were shelling the roads with a large proportion of gas shells. Over our heads enemy aeroplanes circled continually. Of course we credited each one with the sole task of watching our movements and of directing the enemy guns on to us. However that may be, fortunately mist, smoke, and gas made observation most difficult.

Everywhere drifted a greenish-yellow mist and a powerful smell of chlorine pervaded the air. This smell was peculiarly unpleasant and gave us a feeling of slight suffocation. It was rather terrifying to feel that we were quite helpless against it and to know that at any moment a cloud of it might envelop

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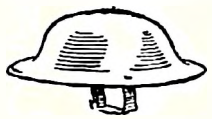
and choke us. We had no real means of protection. Every man carried a damp rag, and we had been advised to urinate on these rags and tie them round our noses and mouths should a gas cloud approach. Not pleasant, but better than suffocation. Lying about everywhere were the corpses of men who had been gassed, their skins a horrible green and their features drawn in expressions of the utmost agony. A feeling of helplessness combined with fury against the enemy mixed together in our minds and brought us into action in a curious mood. Perhaps not more afraid than usual, but more uneasy, fearing the unusual and unexpected, and more determined to make the enemy pay.

The Sirhind Brigade reached St Jean at about 11 A.M., and formed up under cover of the village and of the slight rise on which it stands. (The Brigade now consisted of the 1st H.L.I., 4th King's, 1/1st Gurkhas, 15th Sikhs, and 1/4th Gurkhas.) The Jullundur Brigade formed up north of St Jean, and the Ferozepore Brigade near La Brique. From then until 1.20 P.M. when the attack started the enemy kept the three Brigades under steady artillery fire.

During the last two days the French had been strongly reinforced and had more than made good their considerable loss of guns on the 22nd April.

The attack now about to be launched was to be made by the French from the canal to Boundary Road with French Farm as their first objective on their extreme right, by the Ferozepore Brigade with its left on the above road, and by the Jullundur Brigade with its right on Canadian Farm and left on Estaminet. Farther east, on the ridge on which



stands Mouse Trap Farm, troops of the 27th and 28th Divisions were also to attack.

At 1.20 P.M. the French and British guns opened fire on the area of the German trenches. The French fire was heavy enough and fairly accurate, but the British fire on the Lahore Division front was very weak and ineffective. It could not be otherwise. No one knew the exact position of the German trenches, and in any case, since our guns were away on the west bank of the canal, the observers had to be so far from the guns that the maintenance of communication, and therefore accuracy of fire, was most difficult. Our batteries, too, were under dominating enemy counter-battery fire and were smothered with enemy shells as soon as they opened fire.

As the bombardment opened the Jullundur and Ferozepore Brigades and the French advanced. As the former topped the crest of the low ridge Cross Roads Farm-View Farm the enemy artillery barrage came down on the whole front of attack. Pushing on through this the two Indian brigades came under intense rifle and machine-gun fire from the enemy's trenches south of Oblong Farm and Welsh Farm, and from those round French Farm and west of it. This fire was particularly heavy from the right flank north of Canadian Farm, and both brigades edged away from it, inclining left. As a result their attacks converged on French Farm and pushed the French farther west. The French, well supported by their artillery, advanced more rapidly than the Indian brigades, who had to fight their way forward with rifles and machine-guns.

We, watching from St Jean, could see the attackers

working up Mauser Ridge. We could see British troops attacking French Farm, and farther west the French massing for the assault. The French guns increased their rate of fire. The French infantry rose and charged forward along their whole line. Then, suddenly, all along the German line opposite the French spouted gushing billows of greenish smoke. It was our first sight of a gas cloud. Driven by the wind, the cloud met and enveloped the charging Frenchmen and Indians and hid the leading lines from our view. Of the supporting lines, some men turned and ran, some stopped, and some charged on into the cloud. Then as the cloud rolled on and became thinner we saw the slopes covered with retiring men, right back nearly to La Brique.

The gas had moved west of south, leaving French Farm and all east of it clear. It had struck only the French and the left of the Ferozepore Brigade, but where it had struck it had carried all before it. The attackers were not rallied until right back on a general line east and west through La Brique. Fortunately the German infantry made no attempt to counter-attack. On the right the assault had captured French Farm, but on the remainder of the front it had been stopped on the line French Farm-Hampshire Farm. The British attack on Mouse Trap Farm had made no progress. The Sirhind Brigade at once moved forward to La Brique, ready to meet the counter-attack that did not come. A little later French reserves moved forward to the line of La Belle Alliance Farm and commenced to consolidate there.

The Jullundur Brigade, holding on south-east of

French Farm, had lost heavily, so the Highland Light Infantry, 15th Sikhs, and 1/4th Gurkhas were sent forward to help. They were placed in support south of View Farm, Hill Top Farm, and Cross Roads Farm respectively.

Looking northwards over the crest of the ridge on which these farms stood there could be seen a valley of gently sloping fields, knee-deep in wheat, bounded by shallow ditches, mostly dry, and small trees or low straggling hedges. At the bottom of the valley a line of pollard willows marked a small stream, its banks covered with low bushes of blackberry and gorse. (This stream later proved to be fordable everywhere.) From the stream the fields rose gently to low downs on the skyline at Race Course Farm and what we called, wrongly, Pilckem Ridge (actually Mauser Ridge, of which the highest part was known as Hill 29.) Somewhere on that upward slope were the enemy trenches, but they were well hidden behind hedges and trees. We could locate them at one or two points only, and those in the support line as it proved. Almost due north was Canadian Farm, then to us nameless, with forbidding walls just showing through the poplar trees that surrounded it. The map told us of its moat, but no signs of it could be detected. West of Canadian Farm were two groups of sheds with black walls and red roofs, called before the day was over "Cow Shed" and "Sikh Hut." Between Cow Shed and Canadian Farm was a chalk pit, or something that had the appearance of one. Farther back and a little to the west came Estaminet, red brick with white facings and slate roof, new and bright and jerry-built. Far-

ther to the west lay French Farm so named on this day, burning, as it always seemed to be. In appearance it was but a collection of trees with smoke rising above them and slowly drifting away to the south-west. Our own trenches, just short lengths, were on the line Cow Shed-French Farm. Such was the ground over which we were to attack next day.

There was no change until dark, when the Sirhind Brigade relieved the Jullundur Brigade. Then the 15th Sikhs (right) and the Highland Light Infantry (left) took over the line from the stream at Cow Shed through Sikh Hut to French Farm. The 1/4th Gurkhas (right) and the 1/1st Gurkhas (left) held the ridge View Farm-Cross Roads Farm as supports, while the 4th King's moved into brigade reserve north of English Farm. The line Hampshire Farm-Mouse Trap Farm and thence north-east was held by the 10th Brigade (British).

During the night the French worked forward to the line of the stream north of La Belle Alliance Farm and thence north-westward, while the 1/4th Gurkhas and the 15th Sikhs were ordered to attack the German trenches immediately to their front. No one knew exactly where these trenches were. The advance took place under cover of darkness until a ridge believed to form the enemy's position was reached. Here the men were halted, and a reconnaissance was carried out which disclosed the alarming fact that we had walked into a re-entrant in the enemy's line. We were practically enveloped on three sides by enemy trenches. Fortunately the enemy seemed quite unaware of our presence. Colonel Hill of the 15th Sikhs, who was commanding

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the attack, reported the situation to the Brigade, and the abandonment of the attack was ordered. We slipped away very quietly, the only casualties being one or two of the machine-gun mules which were hit by a stray shell when we were well clear of the enemy.

Early the next day, 27th April, we were issued with pads of cotton-waste impregnated with sal-ammoniac, in fine netting (ladies' veils), as a protection against gas. These had to be wetted and tied over our mouths and noses. Four days earlier an appeal for a million such gas masks had been made to the women of Great Britain, and this was the result. It was a most comforting one. The issue of even this improvised means of protection against gas had a wonderful effect on the morale of all ranks. We felt that we were now on equal terms with our enemy.

It had been decided that on this day the attack should be renewed about mid-day. The French were to attack due northwards with their right on Boundary Road and to capture the German trenches west of French Farm. The Sirhind Brigade was to attack from about Hill Top Farm and to capture the German trenches from about Canadian Farm (held by the enemy) to French Farm. The Ferozepore Brigade from about La Brique was to pass behind the Sirhind Brigade and to attack on our right on the front Mouse Trap Farm-Hampshire Farm. A composite British Brigade was to attack on the right of the Ferozepore Brigade.

Of the Sirhind Brigade the forward battalions, the 1/4th Gurkhas on the right and the 1/1st Gurkhas on the left, were to capture, first, Canadian Farm

(the 1/4th) and Estaminet (the 1/1st), and second, the enemy front line from one hundred yards east of Canadian Farm to the north of Chalk Pit (the 1/4th), and thence to the north-west of Estaminet. It is not to be supposed that the orders were issued in these words, for the enemy positions had not been exactly located ; Canadian Farm and Estaminet were prominent landmarks and they were given as the general direction for the attacks.

The 4th King's were then to pass through the 1/4th Gurkhas and to capture Race Course Farm, while the Highland Light Infantry, passing through the 1/1st Gurkhas, were to advance on Welsh Farm. The final objective of the Ferozepore Brigade was Oblong Farm.

It was apparently the intention that the infantry attacks, starting from the general line Cross Roads Farm-La Belle Alliance Farm, should not begin until nearly the end of the artillery bombardment. This was to commence at 12.30 P.M. and to lift on to the second enemy line (which was better located than the first) at 1.20 P.M. However, Brigadier-General W. G. Walker, V.C., decided, undoubtedly rightly, that full advantage should be taken of the bombardment, and ordered the battalions of the Sirhind Brigade to advance at 12.30.

The leading battalions of the Ferozepore Brigade, however, did not leave La Brique until 12.30 P.M., and did not advance from Cross Roads Farm until 1.20. The British Brigade on the right of Ferozepore did not attack at all. Both its Brigade Commander and Brigade Major were killed by a shell as they were writing the order for the attack, and no

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one else knew anything about it. As for the French, they would not face the enemy's counter-barrage and so made no attempt to attack. The result of all this was that for fifty minutes the Sirhind Brigade played a lone hand, and during that time drew practically the whole of the enemy fire.

The 1/4th Gurkhas formed up, under heavy artillery fire, with the Battalion's right some two hundred yards west of Cross Roads Farm and its left at Hill Top Farm. The leading companies were "A" (right) and "B" (left), with "C" and "D" Companies in battalion reserve. The 1/1st Gurkhas formed up on the left of the 1/4th. Brigade Headquarters were located at View Farm. All the machine-guns were brigaded under Captain R. B. Phayre, 1/4th Gurkhas, in the vicinity of Hill Top Farm or to the west of View Farm.

At 12.30 P.M. the artillery bombardment opened on the whole front of attack and the two Gurkha battalions moved forward. They were supported by the fire of the brigaded machine-guns, and of the Highland Light Infantry and 15th Sikhs in the trenches on the line Cow Shed-French Farm. Hardly had the crest of the hill been crossed than down came the enemy's counter-barrage. Soon afterwards crossed enemy machine-gun fire struck the leading companies. The stream running past Hampshire Farm and Cow Shed was reached in the first rush, but from there it became necessary to fight our way forward.

"A" Company, caught by machine-gun fire from the right, was checked south of Canadian Farm. "B" Company, however, pushed on, and at about

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1 P.M. captured Sikh Hut, the enemy falling back to Chalk Pit. The rear platoons of " B " Company, too, worked forward to Cow Shed. " C " Company, moving in short rushes, swung right between " A " and " B " Companies and reached assaulting distance of Canadian Farm and north-west of it. Then, under the concentrated fire of the brigaded machine-guns, " A " and " C " Companies assaulted the farm from the south and west, carrying it with the bayonet and killing all its defenders.

Unfortunately, Major B. M. L. Brodhurst, commanding the Battalion in the absence of Major H. B. Champain, on leave in England, was killed while directing this assault. About this time Captain L. P. Collins and Captain J. R. Hartwell were wounded, and shortly afterwards Captain E. C. Lentaigne and Lieutenant C. F. F. Moore were hit.

" D " Company now moved forward to pass through " B " and, with " C," to carry on the attack. Before this movement could be completed, however, the artillery bombardment lifted, and instantly the Battalion came under the full fire of the enemy. This came chiefly from the right, and the troops, enfiladed, swung right to meet it. All the British officers except two and many of the Gurkha officers had been hit, and companies and platoons had become hopelessly mixed. Further advance was impossible, and all that could be done was to engage the enemy in a close range fire fight and so make it possible to live at all.

The 4th King's, with their machine-gun section, now advanced on our right in an attempt to carry us forward, but it was a hopeless effort. They, too, were

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brought to a halt and joined in the fire fight. A little later some relief was obtained from the advance of the Ferozepore Brigade which had come up through Mouse Trap Farm, and a few yards of ground were gained in the centre.

In the meantime the experiences of the 1/1st Gurkhas had been much the same as ours. In their case the enfilade fire came chiefly from the left, and, with their centre about Estaminet, which they had captured, they swung left to meet it. Thus we and they were now practically back to back, facing north-east and north-west respectively.

About 3 P.M. a fresh danger arose—namely, shortage of ammunition. All companies were ordered to send back parties to Cross Roads Farm to bring up more. A company of the 4th King's joined them, and a mob of men raced back. The enemy thought that the two battalions had broken (as also for a time did Sirhind Brigade Headquarters), and numbers jumped up on to their parapets to empty their magazines at the runners and perhaps to counter-attack. They quickly discovered their mistake. Such as escaped our fire dived hastily into their trenches again.

The ammunition parties returned with ammunition, and with orders for the attack to be renewed under a fresh artillery bombardment which was to begin at 5.30 P.M. For this attack the Sirhind Brigade was to be reinforced by an improvised British Brigade under Lieutenant-Colonel H. D. Tusson, D.C.L.I., which was to attack on the right of the 4th King's. The whole of this Brigade was but 930 strong. Both the Highland Light Infantry and the 15th Sikhs

were also to take part in the attack, on the left of the 1/1st Gurkhas, as were also the French west of Boundary Road.

Just before the time ordered, the French launched their attack under a short but very violent bombardment. They had been working their way forward the whole afternoon while the enemy had been occupied mainly with the Sirhind and Ferozepore Brigades. This assault, delivered with great dash, failed completely, and the French troops fell back as rapidly as they had advanced. They even abandoned French Farm, which they had taken over from the Highland Light Infantry. Our attack was therefore postponed for an hour while the Highland Light Infantry attacked and recaptured French Farm and the French prepared for another assault.

By this time the fighting on the Sirhind Brigade front had enabled us and our supporting artillery to locate the enemy trenches more accurately. As a result the effect of our artillery fire had greatly improved. The enemy trenches had been damaged a good deal, and, more important still, the enemy wire had been considerably knocked about.

At 6.30 P.M. our guns increased their rate of fire to that of a supporting barrage, and at 7 P.M. the whole line advanced. The enemy's small arms fire was now much weaker than it had been in the earlier attack. "C" Company rushed Chalk Pit, and the men of both "A" and "D" Companies dashed forward and reached the enemy wire and then, passing through the many gaps, penetrated the trenches at a few points. Tusson's Brigade and the 4th King's passed Canadian Farm and assaulted,

gaining a small footing in the enemy's trenches. The renewed attack had completely surprised the German infantry and for a few minutes it looked as if a real success was about to be gained.

The hero of our attack was No. 2417 Rifleman Bhandhoj Rai. This man, finding that all the officers and N.C.O.'s in his part of the field had been hit, assumed command of the two platoons near him. When our bombardment was renewed at 6.30 P.M. he led his men forward, and, as the guns lifted, assaulted. Passing through the wire, the two platoons, some twenty men in all, stormed several bays in the enemy's front trench. This advance encouraged other groups of men to push forward and do the same. Had the casualties among officers and N.C.O.'s earlier in the day not been so heavy this hold on the enemy trenches might have been retained and extended. As it was, too few leaders were left properly to organise the attack and consolidation.

At this critical moment the enemy opened an intense bombardment with gas shells on the French. These, mostly African troops, broke and fled. Looking back—gas still drew all eyes—our men could see the slopes beyond Boundary Road covered with men running southwards. At the distance, through the smoke, the Africans in their light blue uniforms (new to us, we being used to French troops in dark blue coats and red breeches) were mistaken for counter-attacking Germans in field grey. Starting on our left the word "Counter-attack" ran down our ranks. At once our attack died down, the leading men even running back to the cover from which they had started. The few men still in the enemy

trenches were completely isolated and were quickly driven out or killed.

The brigaded machine-guns near Hill Top Farm also mistook the Africans for Germans and turned on to them for a few minutes before the mistake was discovered. French Farm was lost once more, but the Highland Light Infantry at once counter-attacked and recaptured it.

The general attack was now over. It was impossible to get it moving again. As darkness came on it was decided that the position of the advanced troops was too dangerous. In accordance with orders issued at about 9 P.M. the Highland Light Infantry became responsible for a line facing north-east from Cow Shed to French Farm, the 15th Sikhs for one facing west along Boundary Road, and the 1/1st Gurkhas for a line from Cow Shed to Hampshire Farm. The latter farm was held by troops of the 28th Division, who also put a garrison into Canadian Farm. The 1/4th Gurkhas and the 4th King's were ordered to move back into reserve near English Farm.

At this period only three British officers were left with the Battalion, Captains Kensington, Gardiner, and Lentaigne, the latter remaining on duty in spite of his wound.

Many acts of great gallantry and enterprise marked the attack of the Battalion on this day. Unfortunately most of the details cannot be given. The month following the second battle of Ypres was one of much fighting and movement. The witnesses of acts of gallantry had, in many cases, no time to record what they saw, and later, perhaps, they forgot

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the details or were themselves killed or wounded. During the long years that the war lasted records were lost or misplaced and never found. It must be remembered, too, that in the stress of a really hot fight people have not the leisure to find out the names of men whose gallant acts they have seen, perhaps at a distance of a few hundred yards.

One act, however, has been remembered and can be placed on record. When Captain J. R. Hartwell was wounded he crawled into a ditch outside which was lying No. 4817 Rifleman Motilal Thapa. Motilal was severely wounded in the shoulder and arm by a shell splinter, and his arm was hanging to his body by a strip of skin only. When the second line of attackers reached the ditch Captain Hartwell had Motilal carried into the ditch and his arm bound up. The attack passed on, and Captain Hartwell fell asleep and slept for some hours. When he awoke he found that Motilal had propped himself up against the side of the ditch and was holding his field service hat over Captain Hartwell's head so as to keep the sun out of his eyes. Poor Motilal was in great pain, and Captain Hartwell heard him muttering continuously that he must not groan or cry out because he was a Gurkha. The devoted man died as he was being carried to the aid post.

After dark the Battalion stretcher-bearers, mostly bandsmen, worked over the area of attack. Their every movement drew the rapid fire of a nervous enemy and they excited the admiration of all by their splendid work.

The failure of the attack of the 27th was a bitter disappointment to the British Commander-in-Chief,

Sir John French. He now decided to make no more attacks and gradually to withdraw his troops to a line just east of Ypres. When General Foch, commanding the French northern group of armies, heard of this decision he protested strongly. He begged Sir John to hold on to his present positions and promised that next day, the 28th April, he would recapture the ground lost on the 22nd. For the time being, therefore, the British troops held on, too exhausted and weak in artillery to attack but ready to co-operate in any French success.

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The British reserves, however, were set to work to prepare the line in the rear, and all surplus supplies were moved back as transport and carrying parties became available. The proposed withdrawal hardly affected our part of the line, for the new front was to pass through Mouse Trap Farm and thence run westwards to the canal.

The last platoons of the Battalion did not reach the reserve area, just north of English Farm, until the early hours of the morning. The evacuation of the wounded and the clearing of the battlefield had taken all night. As soon as each company arrived the men threw themselves down and slept. Hunger awoke us, and the first sight that greeted our tired eyes was cows. Real live red-and-white cows grazing in the fields. Their owners had fled, and, though many of the cows had been killed, many still remained. They had not been milked for some days. We pounced upon them and had warm fresh milk for breakfast. So long as we remained at Ypres we never lacked for fresh milk—the one bright spot we found in Belgium.

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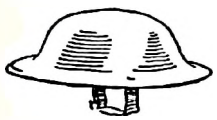

Soon after dawn the enemy recommenced his bombardment, pounding the now ruined villages and searching for the reserve troops. To escape the shelling every man dug for himself a hole and lived in it. The area round English Farm was crammed with troops, for it alone, north of St Jean, afforded any cover from ground observation.

The enemy guns concentrated their fire on small areas at a time. Hard it was to resist the temptation to move when one's own area was the one chosen. However, on this day or the next we had an object-lesson on the folly of moving. The enemy guns got on to a British Territorial battalion near Wieltje Farm. All the senior officers were away attending a conference. At last the young officer left in command of the battalion could stand the shelling no longer. He ordered the battalion to move. The moment the men showed themselves the enemy's heavies ceased fire and their field-guns opened on the battalion with shrapnel. The men dived for cover. But the enemy now had their exact position and at once changed back to H.E. Once more the battalion left the cover, and down came the shrapnel. So the tragi-comedy continued, while we who watched laughed until our sides ached and our eyes filled with tears. Most things are comic in war if they do not happen to oneself. The last view we saw of that battalion was groups of men racing up a slope away to the south-east and disappearing amid a storm of shrapnel over the crest. The last? No, not quite the last, for soon afterwards appeared a blasphemous commanding officer seeking his battalion. He, too, disappeared into the south-east and we saw him no more.

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As a matter of fact, a remarkable feature of the battle of Ypres was the little damage to life that the constant heavy artillery fire really caused, especially when the troops were in trenches, or in reserve where they could scrape out a little cover for themselves. We avoided buildings and kept to the cover of holes and ditches as much as possible. A shell can burst very near to a man in a hole or ditch without hurting him. It is the built-up breastwork that suffers so severely from artillery fire. Besides, the German gunner is, or was, a fool. He fires well and straight, but he does not think. Again and again he would fire on the same spot, generally a building or a cross-road, at the same hour daily or at the same intervals of time. If he found a target at a particular place one day you might be certain that he would fire at that place again the next day and at the same hour. Much of the enemy's superiority in artillery was, therefore, wasted. Had British gunners been handling those guns none of us would have come out of Ypres alive.

Even as it was, however, the enemy artillery gave us little rest by day or night, and was, as much as anything, responsible for the failure of our attacks. Probably the strain that we felt most of all was that caused by want of sleep, since most activities had to be confined to the hours of darkness. The want of proper sleep is severely felt in all battles, and this battle was worse than most in this respect. It is hard to describe the condition to which all ranks were reduced by the strain. Men fell asleep as they walked or ate; signallers as they sent or received messages. An officer giving orders would trail off

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into nonsense, or he would suddenly realise that the man receiving the orders was asleep and was answering him automatically without taking in a word. One officer was handed a signal message, read it, and wrote a reply. Later the reply was brought back to him. When he had been shaken into proper wakefulness he found that it was just a meaningless scribble that he had given as the reply. His pencil had passed over the paper without forming any real letters or words.

Rations, in war, come up to the troops in the evening. Ours came nightly up the Vlamertinge-Wieltje road. From dark till late at night the enemy concentrated much of his fire on the roads. It will be remembered that our transport had been served out to us just before the northward march to Ypres, and that the drivers were new to their work and could not drive. Now this transport had to run the gauntlet of the enemy's fire every night. That taught the drivers to ride and drive. By the third night our waggons came up the road, past the burning houses and crashing shells, like Royal Horse Artillery coming into action. Hell for leather up the road, swaying from side to side, bumping into and over shell-holes or skirting the edges by inches, up to the meeting point ; then a quick swing round, the rations thrown out on the ground, and away they went all out for home. The roar of their wheels on the pave roads rose above the crash of the guns and warned the enemy when to redouble their fire.

St Jean Church escaped serious damage until the evening of the 29th April. Then the enemy guns got on to it in earnest. As darkness fell it caught fire and

was soon enveloped in a great pillar of flame, with the red-hot stonework glowing brightly through the fire. The church had been used as an ammunition store, and when it caught fire a constant stream of Vérey lights rose to the heavens. It was a wonderful sight until the tall steeple wavered and then crashed down amid a cloud of sparks.

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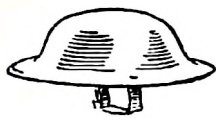
The burning villages seemed never to burn out. At night the lines of the roads could be traced for miles by the flames and the bursting shells.

One of our difficulties was to find proper shelter for our wounded. Every building was a mark for the enemy shells. At first English Farm was used as a combined aid post by many units, the building and its grounds being crammed with wounded. On the 28th, however, the enemy concentrated his fire on it, and the wounded had to be moved. Many died as a consequence. Several other buildings were tried in turn, but with the same result. The constant movement round them drew the enemy's attention. In the end the wounded had to be scattered and hidden away under trees and hedges until the ambulances could come for them after dark. Then the poor fellows had to run the gauntlet of the road bombardments. A man's morale usually collapses as soon as he is wounded, so it can be imagined what these men suffered.

It has already been mentioned that General Foch had promised to attack on the 28th April and recapture the lost ground. The first of these attacks was planned to begin at 11 A.M., and the Sirhind Brigade was ordered to co-operate. The Highland Light Infantry, 4th King's, and 15th Sikhs were



to lead, with the two Gurkha battalions in reserve. The attack was postponed until 1 P.M. When it did start it fizzled out, east of the canal, almost at once. West of the canal the French made good progress and recaptured Steenstraat and Het Sas.

On this day, the 28th April, the Battalion was joined by Lieutenants Greenfield and Giles of the Indian Army Reserve of Officers. Captain C. A. Wood, Medical Officer of the Battalion, was wounded slightly, but remained on duty.

The night 28th-29th April was spent by the Sirhind Brigade, helped by Canadian working parties, in consolidating the line Hampshire Farm - French Farm with Canadian Farm as an advanced post. The 1/4th Gurkhas worked with the other troops. In the moonlight the covering parties could see the Germans, higher up the slope, working on their wire. However, both sides stuck to their work and left fighting until the next morning.

The 29th was spent by the French in preparations for a great attack on the 30th. The Sirhind Brigade rested and reorganised, though no change was made in the location of the battalions. It was a day of peace, even the enemy artillery taking little notice of us. From the east and north, however, came the steady roar of guns where the Germans were unsuccessfully attacking the 28th Division and the Belgians.

The great French attack of the 30th April was to have commenced at 8 A.M. The Sirhind Brigade was to have co-operated, and by that hour its reserve battalions (4th King's, 1/1st Gurkhas, and 1/4th Gurkhas) had moved into position near Hill Top

Farm ready to attack towards Race Course Farm. The hour for the attack was, however, changed to 11.15 A.M. This hour came, but the French infantry did not move. Since our attack was to be but a subsidiary operation, we did not move either. The same thing happened at 1 P.M., though the French artillery and ours put down a heavy bombardment on the enemy trenches. Towards evening we moved back to our shelters near English Farm. The movements had attracted the attention of the enemy artillery, who, having no infantry attack of their own to support, shelled us heavily all day.

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It had been decided to make one last effort on the 1st May; that is, the French had so decided, and the Sirhind Brigade had once more been ordered to co-operate. The French had agreed that should this effort fail no further attacks should be made, but a withdrawal to the new line just east of Ypres should be effected.

The objective of this attack was to be Hill 29, the highest point of Mauser Ridge. Against the enemy trenches defending the ridge were to be concentrated every available gun and man. The Sirhind Brigade, with the 1/1st Gurkhas left and the 1/4th Gurkhas right as its advanced troops, was to attack astride Boundary Road. The French had a few troops in French Farm, and then a line, in disconnected lengths of trench, from the stream due north of La Belle Alliance Farm to the north-westward some five or six hundred yards from the enemy's front defences.

The attacking troops were to form up on a general line due west from View Farm. Under a first

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bombardment the leading troops were to advance to within assaulting distance of the enemy front trenches, and then, under a second bombardment, to assault these trenches and the support trenches beyond. No one seems to have thought what would happen to the infantry lying out within two hundred yards of the enemy trenches without covering fire. The Sirhind Brigade arranged for the brigaded machine-guns to reserve their fire until the end of the first bombardment and then to open in an attempt to keep down the enemy's fire. When the time came this arrangement proved more effective than any of us dared to hope, and, though shell-holes had to be avoided owing to the danger of gas, we managed to find cover in ditches and odd lengths of trench.

During the morning of this day the first proper gas masks had been issued. These, like the first, had been made by the women of Great Britain. They consisted of flannel helmets, impregnated with suitable chemicals, which fitted right over the head, the ends being tucked in under the collar. They had celluloid eye-pieces. Against chlorine they were quite effective.

At mid-day the 1/4th Gurkhas, some 350 strong, moved by platoons from the reserve area and formed up. The leading companies were " D " (right) and " C " (left) under Captain Gardiner, the Adjutant, while " A " and " B " Companies, now under Captain Phayre, were in battalion reserve, the whole being in four lines of platoons in fours. Since Captain Lentaigne's wound was worse the Battalion was commanded by Captain Kensington, 130th Baluchis (attached). The 1/1st Gurkhas, about our own strength,

formed up on our left. Beyond, west of the 1/1st, were the French troops in irregular lines. They were hidden behind hedges, &c., and under considerable artillery fire (we were not, strange to say), but apparently ready to move.

At 3.10 P.M. our guns and those of the French opened with a crash. It was curious to notice the difference in the intensity of the fire: ten shells on the French front to one on ours. Time! Our officers and those of the 1/1st waved to the French officers. They waved back, and away we went.

The order was—no firing, no halting; move as fast as possible to assaulting distance, there await the second bombardment of ten minutes, and then assault.

As we topped the hill between View Farm and La Belle Alliance Farm the enemy barrage crashed down just in front of us. "Could anything live in it?" Certainly it did not look like it. There was no check. Some men did stop, but they were carried forward by Captain Gardiner who followed the Battalion for the purpose. The surprising thing is that we got through with not more than forty casualties.

The bottom of the valley was reached. For a time we were clear of the enemy's artillery barrage, but even here were open to severe enfilade machine-gun fire. As we climbed the far slopes we looked westward to see how the French were getting on. There was not a sign of movement beyond the 1/1st Gurkhas. Neither then nor later did we see a French soldier, except a few crouching in the ditches around French Farm.

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Our bombardment ceased, and soon afterwards we reached French Farm. To live then on the open slopes east of the farm was impossible, and the two leading companies crowded into the farm grounds and the ditches round them. The 1/1st Gurkhas were then along a hedge and ditch running west from the south-west corner of the farm enclosure.

Our signallers had run out a line as we advanced, and Brigade Headquarters were now asked whether we were to assault as arranged. The answer that came was, "Only if the French assault too." Of an assault by the French there was no chance, for their troops were still in position 1500 yards in rear. Soon afterwards we were told that the French would attack at 4.40 P.M., and that we were then to assault with them.

The German wire in front of us, most formidable and of great depth, was quite uncut. It was therefore decided to try and cut it before the assault. The brigaded machine-guns near Hill Top Farm were asked to support this attempt. Under their fire and that of every available rifle Nos. 2 and 15 Platoons charged forward with slung rifles, carrying wire-cutters and kukris. They reached the wire, but the leading men were shot down and the attempt failed. The men of No. 15 Platoon escaped into the ditch along Boundary Road, and along it back to the cover of the farm.

For the men of No. 2 Platoon, however, there was no such means of escape. They had to take refuge in a short length of shallow trench about thirty yards from the enemy wire, and there, crowded together, they remained until dark. The enemy

tried hard to bomb this little party out of its cover, but the distance was just too great. Since no man of the party could show his nose above the parapet, bombs provided the only means of defence. Though the enemy made no attempt to attack, the men made assurance doubly sure by throwing bombs in their direction at intervals. To keep the platoon supplied with bombs occupied the attention of the whole Battalion all the afternoon. Under heavy covering fire men would crawl along the ditch beside Boundary Road as near as they could get, and from there would throw the bombs, one by one, to the men marooned in the trench. In view of the possible assault, attempts were made to dribble more men up to the trench, but the enemy, surprised by the wire-cutting attempt, was now thoroughly awake, and every movement drew intense fire.

At one time a German suddenly jumped on to his parapet, and, with hands up, rushed through a gap in the wire and raced for our line. It was a hopeless attempt. A hail of German bullets followed him, and he fell riddled when about half-way across. We shouted for more to come and surrender, but the fate of the first evidently discouraged any others who may have been minded that way.

When the time came for the second French attack the assaulting troops were still 1500 yards away from the enemy trenches, and though the 15th Sikhs and 4th King's had moved forward to the stream south of us ready to help, we were ordered not to assault. Indeed our guns did not even increase the rate of fire that they had maintained all the afternoon since the original bombardments.

This last failure of the French to attempt an assault settled the question of policy. Sir John French informed General Foch that he would attempt no more attacks, but would commence his withdrawal that night.

Towards dusk we received orders to collect our wounded and then to withdraw to St Jean, where we would receive fresh orders. Troops from a British division relieved the Highland Light Infantry in their trenches (now a complete line from Hampshire Farm to Boundary Road), and at 9 P.M. the Sirhind Brigade began to withdraw.

We and the 1/1st Gurkhas took a long time to collect our wounded and bury our dead. It was not until midnight that we reached St Jean. There we found the rest of the Brigade waiting impatiently. We were to march *via* the east and south of Ypres to Ouderdom. Our first line transport had been sent on long before, and was, in fact, already at Ouderdom.

It was a terrible march; worse, though many miles shorter, than the northward march of the 24th April. The truth is that we were nearly at the end of our endurance. Since morning we had eaten nothing and drunk nothing. The water in the ditches was foul with gas and rotting flesh. The wounded were left to be carried away in ambulances, but our machine-guns, reserve ammunition, picks, shovels, and all first-line impedimenta had to be carried by the men, and the 1/1st were in like case. The way the exhausted men carried their loads all the way to Ouderdom was a marvel.

The march was wonderfully arranged, however:

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a masterpiece of staff work. As usual, the enemy were shelling the roads. At every cross-roads, and there were many, staff officers met us and guided us so as to avoid the worst of the enemy bombardments. This greatly increased the length of the march, but saved us many casualties. In the darkness the Vérey lights all round us gave a wonderful picture of the salient from which we were emerging. Dawn broke soon after we had crossed the canal south of Ypres, but we continued the march in open formation to Vlamertinge, and reached Ouderdom, completely exhausted, at 7 A.M. on the 2nd May.

At Ouderdom the Battalion was joined by Major H. E. Moule, lately arrived from India.

That same evening the Sirhind Brigade marched south to join the Indian Corps once more in the vicinity of Neuve Chapelle.

Thus ended the Battalion's part in the Second Battle of Ypres.

The Battalion's casualties during the battle were as follows :—

Killed.—Major B. M. L. Brodhurst commanding, Jemadar Nainsing Rana, and 44 Gurkha other ranks.

Wounded.—Captains L. P. Collins, D.S.O., J. R. Hartwell, E. C. Lentaigne, C. F. F. Moore, 123rd Outram's Rifles (attached), C. A. Wood, I.M.S. (attached); Subadars Dhanlal Gurung, 2/4th Gurkhas, and Kalu Gurung; Jemadars Manraj Gurung, Jitbahadur Rana, and Gunjabir Gurung, I.O.M., and 192 Gurkha other ranks.

These casualties made a total of 243 out of the 603 of all ranks who had marched from Ouderdom on the 25th April.

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For its services in the battle the Regiment was granted the Battle Honours "Ypres, 1915" and "St Julien."

The following individual awards were made for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty[1]:—

INDIAN ORDER OF MERIT.

No. 2417 Rifleman Bhandhoj Rai.

INDIAN DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL.

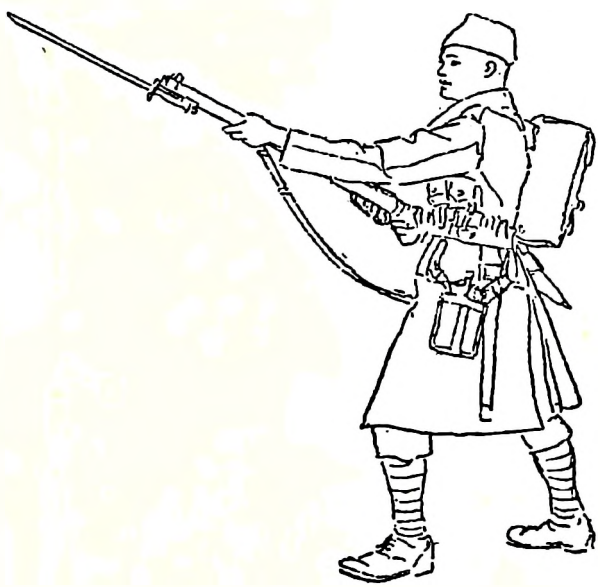
No. 4293 Rifleman Deotinarain Newar, stretcher-bearer.
No. 3904 Rifleman Patiram Kanwar, stretcher-bearer.

MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

Captain W. A. Gardiner.

The services of the Battalion were specially mentioned in G.H.Q. Orders.

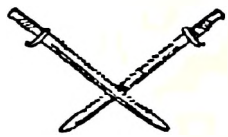
[1] The rewards granted to individuals for this battle did not err on the side of generosity. The fountain of honour did not flow freely in those early days of the War.



CHAPTER XI.

1ST BATTALION.

Aubers



ON the night of the 2nd-3rd May 1915 the Battalion marched southwards from Ouderdom, and on the 4th May reached its old billets at Calonne. During the march a draft of 250 men from the Burma Military Police joined the Battalion as a very welcome reinforcement.

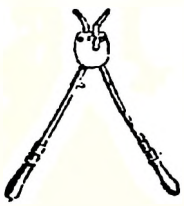
The next few days were spent in reorganisation and in replacing the material and equipment lost at Ypres in preparation for the battles that were soon to follow.

It will be remembered that the battle of Neuve Chapelle was fought in the hope of driving the Germans off the high ground of the Aubers Ridge, and that, in spite of a considerable success, this main object was not achieved.

As soon as the battle of Neuve Chapelle had died down Sir John French decided to try again on a larger scale. Before the battle could be renewed, however, the Germans had attacked at Ypres, as described in the last chapter.

In the meanwhile the Germans had been attacking the Russians, away on the eastern frontier of

Aubers



Germany, and had been gaining great successes. It became clear that unless help could be given to the Russians their armies would be destroyed.

For this reason the French decided to launch a great attack against the Germans in France. The object of this attack was to cut the communications of the northern group of German armies, the first step being the capture of Vimy Ridge, about fifteen miles south of Givenchy. General Joffre asked the British Army to help by launching an attack on the British front.

Sir John French did not wish to attack so soon. The battle of Ypres was still raging, and there was a danger that the British 2nd Army might be defeated. In addition to that the British Commander considered that he had not got sufficient artillery to ensure the success of a big attack. Moreover, at the battles of Ypres and Neuve Chapelle the British had suffered severely, and their reinforcements included a very large number of partly trained troops.

In war, however, we must help our allies, and so Sir John French agreed to join in the great battle.

This decision resulted in the battles of Aubers and Festubert, 1915, fought by the British 1st Army under Sir Douglas Haig. The first objective of both was the capture of the Aubers Ridge, but the final objects were much more ambitious and aimed at driving the Germans out of France by the defeat of their reserves on the Douai Plain. Both the battles were fought while the great French attacks at Vimy Ridge were in progress.

The British attack at Aubers was to be made by three corps. The Ist Corps was to attack on the

Aubers

right, from the Rue du Bois towards La Bassée. The IVth Corps was to attack on the left, about three miles north-east of Neuve Chapelle, in a south-easterly direction. The Indian Corps, with the Meerut Division leading and the Lahore Division in reserve, was to attack in the centre, from the Rue du Bois near Port Arthur towards the east and past the south of the Bois du Biez.

Of the Lahore Division, the Jullundur Brigade was to hold the front line round Neuve Chapelle, the Ferozepore Brigade was to be in Divisional reserve near Pont Logy, and the Sirhind Brigade was to be in Corps reserve south of Lestrem.

During the night 8th-9th May the Sirhind Brigade moved forward from Calonne to its reserve area south of Lestrem, the 1/4th Gurkhas occupying billets in the Rue du Paradis.

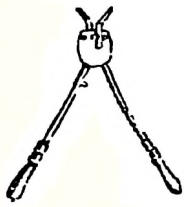
The following day Captain G. F. Robinson of the Indian Army Reserve of Officers joined the Battalion.

On this day, the 9th May, the battle of Aubers took place.

Had the attacks of the IVth and Indian Corps been successful all the Germans defending the area opposite Neuve Chapelle would have been cut off from their main forces. Owing, however, to the very thorough fortifications of the German front line and our own lack of the heavy shells necessary to break up this line, the attacks were far from successful.

In spite of enormous casualties (ten thousand in the one day of the battle), little ground was gained by any of the three attacking corps. Indeed, their

Aubers



attacks failed even to keep the German reserves pinned to the British front, for before evening the Germans were able to send away two reserve divisions from the British front to oppose the French.

The French themselves were more successful. They captured the German trenches on a front of four miles and penetrated to a depth of two and a half miles, but they failed to capture Vimy Ridge. They carried on the battle for some days, but had to break it off at last without gaining any great success.

So ended the battle of Aubers. The Battalion was not engaged at all, and the Regiment was granted the Battle Honour " Aubers " only because the Battalion formed part of one of the corps that fought the battle.

As soon as Sir John French realised that the battle of Aubers was a failure he ordered Sir Douglas Haig to make preparations for a fresh attack in much the same area.

As a result, various attacks were launched on the front Festubert-Neuve Chapelle between the 16th and 20th May.

The Battalion was not actually engaged with the enemy in any of these, being used mainly in support of divisions of its own and other corps. The period, however, was a trying one for all ranks. Owing to the almost ceaseless movement from one place to another no proper reorganisation was possible; constant small casualties from shell-fire were suffered, and heavy rain did little to brighten the situation.

The Battalion's casualties between midnight of the 14th-15th May and midnight of the 18th-19th

May were at least fifteen killed and fifty-two wounded, and were probably rather more than this.

At this time there was left with the Battalion only one officer who had originally belonged to it—namely, Major Moule, who had recently joined from India.

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Festubert, 1915

During the night 20th-21st May the Battalion, together with the rest of the Sirhind Brigade, took over trenches in the vicinity of the Ferme du Bois.

The line was held by the 15th Sikhs on the left, one company of the 1st Highland Light Infantry in the centre, and one company of the Battalion on the right in touch with the 47th Division. The 4th King's and three companies of the 1/1st Gurkhas were in brigade reserve. The position of the remaining company of the 1/1st Gurkhas will be described below.

These trenches had been captured from the enemy by the 6th Brigade a few days before, and had been converted by adapting the parados as a parapet. They formed a salient towards the enemy line, their general direction being from north to south as far as the right of the Highland Light Infantry portion and thence from north-east to south-west.

From the meeting point of the Highland Light Infantry and the 1/4th Gurkhas there ran an old communication trench with sides raised about three and a half feet above the general level of the country. This communication trench ran south-east towards the Ferme Cour d'Avoué for about 350 yards and then turned north-east and joined the enemy line just south of the Ferme du Bois.

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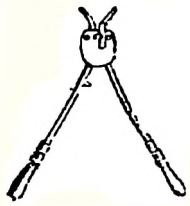

The remaining company of the 1/1st Gurkhas held this trench as far as the bend. The next hundred yards or so of it had been knocked down. The Germans held the remainder with small observation and bombing posts, one at its head and one just south of the Ferme du Bois.

The German line ran close behind the Ferme du Bois, southwards to a point about three hundred yards behind the Ferme Cour d'Avoué, and thence in a south-westerly direction for some way. The Ferme Cour d'Avoué was thus in an angle of the enemy line, and any British attack in its vicinity was open to hostile fire or counter-attack from two different directions.

The Ferme Cour d'Avoué was south by east of our line and about seven hundred yards from it. A large farm surrounded by a deep moat, it was in ruins, a constant target for the artillery of both sides, and for this reason held by neither. The fields round it had at one time been cultivated, and were now overgrown with coarse grass and self-grown crops about two feet high. They were divided by ditches, full of water and of varying depth and width. None of these ditches were less than three feet deep and two feet wide, and they formed serious obstacles to movement, especially at night. Most of them were bordered by willow and elm trees, few of which had yet been knocked down by artillery fire.

The Ferme du Bois, also a ruin, was immediately east of the brigade line and about four hundred yards from it. Through the Ferme du Bois from north-west to south-east ran a very low spur, which, together with the trees and grass of the fields around,

hid the German trenches east and south of the farm from our own trenches, and even from our observation points farther back. The enemy's trenches north of the Ferme du Bois were less well concealed and could be located, for the ground there was more open.

Such was the nature of the country in which the Battalion found itself on the morning of the 21st May.

On that day the Sirhind Brigade received orders to capture the German trenches east of the Ferme du Bois by an attack the same night.

This attack was to be in conjunction with an attack by the Canadian Division farther south. Its object, however, is far from clear. The enemy trenches opposite the Sirhind Brigade were not within small arm range of the Canadians, and fire from them could have had no effect on the Canadian attack. Had the Sirhind Brigade attack been successful, it is unlikely that a single brigade could have maintained its position on so narrow a front and in the midst of the enemy position. We were told at first that our assault was to lead the way for a general attack by the 51st (Highland) Division farther north, but this Division did not take part in the attack.

Possibly the intention was to seize the Ferme du Bois, a good viewpoint, in order to deny it to the enemy. The ruined farm was not occupied by the enemy, and without doubt it could have been seized by our troops on the 21st, or again after the night attack. It formed an excellent target for artillery, however, and the Germans made no attempt to hold it for that very reason. Had our troops tried to hold it they would have suffered dreadfully

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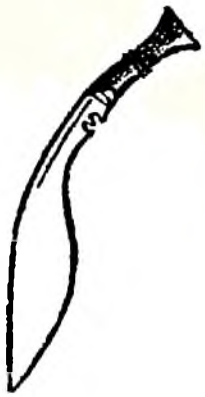
from the enemy's artillery fire. We must suppose that the idea was to establish our line in the low ground east and north of the farm in order to deny the farm to the enemy.

The attack was to be carried out by the 1st Highland Light Infantry on the left, the 1/1st Gurkhas in the centre, and the 1/4th Gurkhas on the right, each less one company and their machine-gun sections which were holding the line, attacking from the south-west to the north-east. The 1/1st Gurkhas were to pass through the Ferme du Bois and to capture the German line north-east of it on a front of about 250 yards. The 1st Highland Light Infantry were to capture the enemy's line north-west of the 1/1st Gurkhas, while the 1/4th Gurkhas were to capture a group of trench junctions south of the 1/1st Gurkhas' objective. It must be realised that at this time all Gurkha and Indian battalions were much under strength. On the 21st May the 1/4th Gurkhas had a ration strength of all ranks, excluding followers, of 437.

The success of a night attack depends mainly on two factors—thorough reconnaissance and complete surprise. In this case thorough reconnaissance was impossible from our trenches. The enemy's trenches could not be seen, nor could the ditches be examined. The enemy's advanced posts, two in the communication trench and others hidden in the ditches, fired on anyone trying to move east or south of the 1/1st Gurkhas' trench. These posts could have been driven in on the 21st and a reconnaissance thus made possible, but such action would have warned the enemy and the element of surprise would thus



have been lost. In the hope of attaining surprise we sacrificed reconnaissance.

In order to attack "square" to their objective, and so to reduce to a minimum the chance of loss of direction, the troops were to form up at right angles to the trenches held by the 1/4th Gurkhas. The Highland Light Infantry and the 1/1st Gurkhas were covered whilst forming up by the company of the 1/1st Gurkhas holding the communication trench, but the 1/4th Gurkhas formed up in No Man's Land and were thus exposed, both in front and on the right flank, to discovery by enemy patrols.

Soon after dark on the 21st May the three companies from each of the attacking battalions moved forward to the front line. British officers with scouts and guides then moved to the forming up area. As the guides of each platoon were posted that platoon was led into position and ordered to lie down. By 11 P.M. all the attacking companies were in position and ready for the advance. This was to begin exactly at midnight.

As usual, the Vérey lights rose and fell over the German line. It speaks well for the steadiness and training of the troops that the enemy were not alarmed.

At night in France there was generally a good deal of rifle-fire. Jumpy sentries fired at shadows, bored or cold sentries fired to amuse themselves or to keep themselves warm. Patrols and parties repairing wire and trenches drew fire from time to time. A line silent by day would generally start to be noisy as soon as the light failed.

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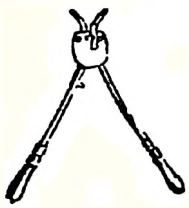


Now, however, the whole line was quiet. Our guns were steadily bombarding the enemy's trenches exactly as they had been doing for days, but not a rifle-shot was fired.

The 1/4th Gurkhas formed up, with "C" Company and "A" Company leading, in two lines of platoons in fours at deploying intervals. The scouts were a few yards in front and to the right flank. "D" Company was in reserve in one line of half companies in fours at fifty yards' interval and one hundred yards' distance from the leading companies. "C" and "A" Companies were to storm the enemy's front line, whilst "D" Company was to pass through the leading companies on their objective and to storm the trench junction east of the front line and to gain touch with the 1/1st Gurkhas.

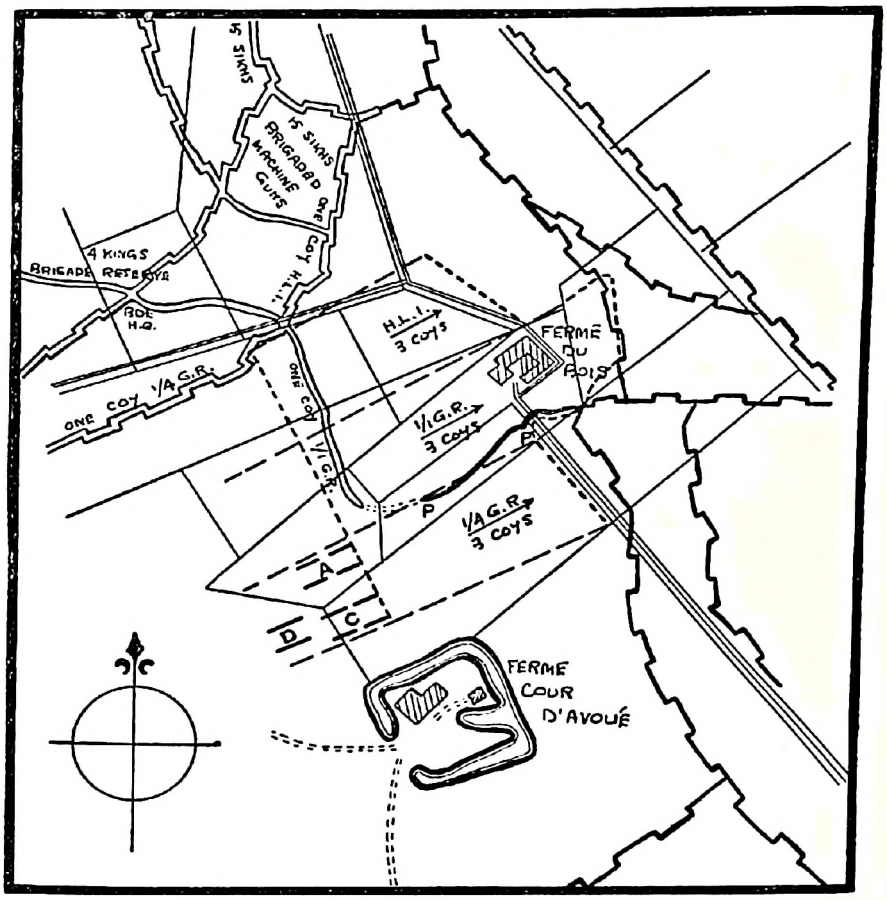
As the troops moved forward, exactly at midnight, the sudden crash of a bomb and a burst of rifle-fire showed that, according to plan, a party of the 1/1st Gurkhas had rushed the enemy post at the head of the communication trench. This party was then to push on rapidly down, and on each side of, the trench, and to rush the second post. At the same time our artillery increased its rate of fire to a barrage on the enemy's trenches.

Half the distance to our objective had been covered before the enemy fired. Then, as our guns lifted, the enemy lines burst into flame.

The Battalion was struck by a storm of machine-gun and rifle bullets from front and right flank. No one can say clearly what happened after that. Most of the men reached a ditch—we suppose it was the ditch bordering the road just short of the enemy's

FESTUBERT

ATTACK ON THE FERME DU BOIS



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front line—which was full of barbed wire. From there, and from the fields just behind, they engaged the enemy in the trenches in a fire fight at point-blank range.

Major Moule, Captain Robinson, and many of their company disappeared and were never heard of again. It is thought that they lost touch with the remainder of the Battalion, finally reached the enemy's trenches unsupported, and were annihilated in endeavouring to carry out their orders to take them.

On our front the attack had failed. On our left the 1/1st Gurkhas, sheltered during most of their advance by the Ferme du Bois and finding the wire on their front cut, stormed the enemy's front trench. This they held for a couple of hours, but were then forced back to the Ferme du Bois. On their left the Highland Light Infantry, like ourselves, had failed to reach the enemy's line.

All guns were now silent on our front. None dared to fire for fear of hitting their own men. But the fight with machine-guns, rifles, and bombs continued to rage furiously in the darkness.

At about 2 A.M. the Brigade Commander began to receive reports of the failure of the attack, and an hour later, when he heard that the 1/1st Gurkhas had lost their hold on the enemy's trenches, he ordered a withdrawal before daylight.

By this time the fire fight, except near the Ferme du Bois, had died down. We were able to evacuate our wounded and withdraw to our own trenches, the enemy making no attempt to follow up.

Our casualties, from midnight of the 18th-19th

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till dawn of the 22nd May, amounted to 102, out of a total strength engaged of less than 300 of all ranks. They were as follows :—

Killed.—Major H. E. Moule, Captain G. F. Robinson, I.A.R.O., and 20 Gurkha other ranks, most of whom were reported as missing but are now known to have been killed.

Wounded.—Lieutenant E. G. Greenfield, I.A.R.O., Subadar Senbir Gurung (2/4th Gurkhas), Jemadar Ramkishen Dura, Jemadar Mahabir Thakur (2/4th Gurkhas), a Gurkha officer of the Burma Military Police, and 76 Gurkha other ranks.

We should remember that half the Gurkha ranks who fought for the 1st Battalion in this battle were men of the 2nd Battalion or volunteers from the Burma and Assam Military Police, and right well they served us.

For its share in the battle from the 16th to the 22nd May the Regiment was awarded the Battle Honour "Festubert, 1915."

On the 26th May the Sirhind Brigade was relieved in the trenches opposite the Ferme du Bois and moved back to rest in the vicinity of Calonne.

From that date until the end of June there followed alternate periods of trench duty and rest. The trench duty was carried out mainly on the front Rue du Bois-Neuve Chapelle-Laventie, and calls for little notice. We held our trenches, sniped the Germans, and were sniped in return, patrolled, and worked on repairs and improvements to the trenches. The guns were seldom silent, those of each side amusing themselves by pounding the infantry opposite them. It was a hot and monotonous time. The trenches were very dusty, and we suffered much from lice and flies. During the trench duty periods

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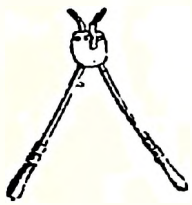

the average number of casualties was about three a day, usually the result of sniping and sometimes of shell-fire.

During this period the following officers joined the Battalion :—

Capt. C. D. Roe, 1/4th Gurkhas.
Capt. H. T. Molloy, 5th Gurkhas.
Lieut. A. W. Woodhead, I.A.R.O.
Lieut. C. C. E. Manson, I.A.R.O.
Lieut. W. L. S. Boileau, I.A.R.O.
Lieut. W. Ross-Stewart, I.M.S.

Captain C. A. Wood, I.M.S., who had been with the Battalion since its departure from India, was relieved by Lieutenant Kennedy at the beginning of June. Soon afterwards Lieutenant Kennedy was, in his turn, relieved by Lieutenant Ross-Stewart.

Lieutenant Greenfield was transferred to the 1/1st Gurkhas.

In July considerable praise was earned from the Corps Commander, Sir James Willcocks, in connection with a series of daring daylight reconnaissances of the enemy's line opposite Neuve Chapelle.

The following account is taken from ' The Indian Corps in France ' :—

" On the night 1st July Captain Roe, accompanied by Lieutenant Manson and Acting Subadar-Major Senbir Gurung, made a reconnaissance, and the following morning the same party, strengthened by two riflemen, went out at 3 A.M. with a view to ascertaining which of the network of trenches in front was actually held by the enemy, whether some ruined houses were occupied, the exact position of two snipers' posts (the occupants of which had been giving considerable trouble), the amount of wire in front of the German

trenches, and, finally, what use the enemy was making of a re-entrant in their line.

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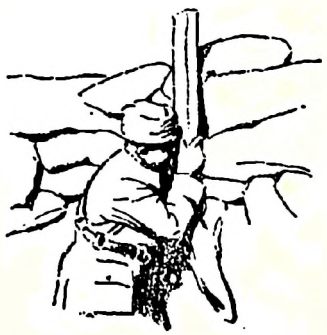
"The party crawled out through the long grass, and, meeting with no opposition, managed to get right up to the front line of the trench, which they investigated, and ascertained exactly which position was occupied by day. Creeping along, Captain Roe explored the buildings in the hope of finding a sniper asleep, but failed in his quest, although he made a systematic search through each house. He was able, however, to locate the haunt of the snipers by finding about a hundred empty cartridge cases which had evidently been recently fired, while five yards to the left was a dummy machine-gun. Still crawling along, the party found that the whole of that part of the line was wired in the most formidable manner, and that, unless cut by artillery fire, passage through it would be impossible. Further, a most important point was cleared up. It was evident from the arrangement of the wire that the enemy intended to use the re-entrant as a trap for us in any future attack, hoping that we would make for it and thus be taken from every angle by machine-gun fire. At another point Captain Roe found a barricade which was occupied, and doubtless contained a machine-gun.

"The adventure was destined to end with some excitement, for as the party was creeping on they saw a German officer at a distance of about 250 yards in the act of getting over the parapet. Captain Roe and the Subadar-Major fired together and hit the officer in the hip, knocking him backwards. Immediately another man showed his head and shoulders, evidently trying to discover where the bullets had come from. Captain Roe fired again, and the man fell. The result of a third attempt at another man who looked over could not be observed. The only reply was one wild shot fired at an angle of about forty-five degrees away to the left. The party eventually returned in safety, having completely carried out their programme.

"On the 3rd July two men of the Battalion were hit while on listening patrol. Captain Roe decided to go out next morning and try to discover their fate, and, further,



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to ascertain whether the enemy had occupied the ruins near which his men had fallen. In view of the probability that some opposition would be met, the preparations were now more elaborate. Covering fire was to be supplied from the trench of the 1/1st Gurkhas, and a small party under Lieutenant Manson was posted in a suitable position to assist in case of emergency. Another party under Subadar-Major Senbir Gurung was put out on the right of Captain Roe's line of advance, and six men accompanied the officer to search the ruins. At the same time the 84th Battery R.F.A. was to assist by the fire of one gun towards the left and on a new communication trench made by the enemy. Captain Roe carried five bombs himself, while the Subadar-Major also had five, and twenty-four were kept handy in reserve.

"At 8.10 A.M. the expedition started, and after posting Lieutenant Manson's party Captain Roe pushed along up a communication trench, and had just arrived at his pre-arranged position when the 84th Battery fired its first shell. At this moment three bombs were thrown at the party from a distance of about twenty yards, followed almost at once by two more. All five exploded round Captain Roe and his orderly, partially burying them. The six men behind them, thinking they were killed, retired towards the British line. Subadar-Major Senbir, however, at once rallied and brought them up to where Captain Roe was busily engaged in bombing the Germans. Lance-Naik Lachman Gurung, a bomber, rushed up and took the enemy from the front, and with his assistance they were driven back with the loss of five of their number. They retreated until they were seen to be joined by an officer and about twenty-five men. Captain Roe had now used all his bombs, and had to retire to the spot where he had left his reserve supply. Armed with these, he again advanced and bombed the officer's party steadily back. Then it was found that the enemy had got round on both flanks, and they soon made their presence felt by bombing and firing.

"Subadar-Major Senbir was now hit by a bomb which shattered his left leg, but in spite of his suffering he held

on in the most gallant way and continued to direct his men. At this juncture Lieutenant Manson caught sight of the Germans and at once opened fire. The enemy were seized with panic and were bolting through the ruins when two shrapnel shells fired by the 84th Battery burst right over them and added wings to their flight.

"By good luck our bombs had outlasted those of the enemy, and it was due to this fact and the assistance of the 84th Battery that Captain Roe was able to return with only one casualty, Subadar-Major Senbir Gurung. This Gurkha officer had throughout the campaign behaved with the greatest gallantry, having especially distinguished himself at Ypres, and whenever he got near the enemy, to use the words of his commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel H. F. Bateman-Champain, he showed amazing coolness and resource.

"Thus ended a most dashing little episode, the skilful and daring execution of which obtained for us information of considerable value and proved the worth of our men in hand-to-hand fighting against superior numbers.

"For his conspicuous gallantry and leadership Captain Roe was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, while Lieutenant Manson received the Military Cross, and Subadar-Major Senbir Gurung the 2nd Class Indian Order of Merit."

The following were awarded the Indian Distinguished Service Medal :—

No. 798 Lance-Naik Asbir Rana.
No. 4945 Lance-Naik Lachman Gurung.
No. 1074 Rifleman Garbha Sing Gurung.

while the following received special commendation from the Corps Commander :—

No. 3115 Rifleman Pathu Rana.
No. 4577 Rifleman Karn Sing Burathoki.

This patrol action was typical of many that occurred both by day and night, though, of course,

it was on a larger scale than most and more fruitful of results.

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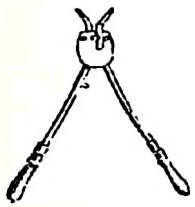


The remainder of July and the first part of August were spent in the usual routine work of trench warfare varied with rests.

During this time there occurred an unfortunate accident with a bomb, which resulted in the death of Lieutenant A. D. D. Carter and the wounding of Subadar Setu Thapa. For this accident the mechanism of the bomb was alone responsible.

At this period Captain L. P. Collins and Captain J. R. Hartwell rejoined the Battalion from England, and Captain R. A. K. Wilson of the 3rd Shropshire Light Infantry joined the Battalion for duty.

Gallipoli

On the 20th August, while the Battalion was in the trenches, orders were received to proceed forthwith to the Dardanelles, where General Sir Ian Hamilton, in command, had asked for an additional one thousand Gurkhas as a result of the fine qualities shown by the Gurkha battalions already under his command.

Sir James Willcocks, commanding the Indian Corps, in saying good-bye to the Battalion stated that, much as he regretted letting us go, he had decided that he must send to Sir Ian Hamilton nothing but the best, and for that reason he had selected the 1/4th Gurkhas.

The Battalion proceeded at once to Marseilles, where it was made up to a strength of twenty Gurkha officers and 990 rank and file by drafts from the 2nd Battalion, the 2nd K.E.O. Gurkhas, and the 9th Gurkhas (the latter exclusively men of the Burma and Assam Military Police).

On the 25th August the Battalion sailed from Marseilles in H.M. Transport *Teesta*, and on the 30th reached Mudros, the advanced base for the army in Gallipoli.

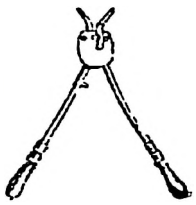
At Mudros, Major A. B. Tillard, D.S.O., who had taken over command in Marseilles, was transferred to command the 1/5th Gurkhas.

After a stay of some days at Mudros one double company went on ahead of the Battalion and landed at Anzac on the 7th September, the remainder of the Battalion following and landing at Anzac during the night of the 12th-13th.

While serving in France the Battalion had been organised on the British model, with four companies of four platoons each, the reorganisation having been effected on the journey from India to France. Now, on joining the Peninsular Army, the Battalion reverted to the old Indian organisation of eight companies linked in pairs as double companies.

The British officers who landed with the Battalion at Anzac were as follows :—

Lt.-Col. H. F. Bateman-Champain, 1/9th Gurkhas, commanding.
Capt. L. P. Collins, D.S.O.
Capt. C. D. Roe, D.S.O.
Capt. R. A. K. Wilson, 3rd Shropshire Light Infantry.
Capt. L. B. Harbord, 44th Merwara Infantry.
Capt. W. A. Gardiner, 2/4th Gurkhas.
Capt. J. R. Hartwell, Adjutant.
Lieut. R. V. Brandon, 18th Infantry.
Lieut. A. W. Woodhead, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. H. E. Giles, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. C. C. E. Manson, M.C., I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. W. L. S. Boileau, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. A. E. Dobbs, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. S. G. Mellis-Smith, I.A.R.O.
Lieut. W. Ross-Stewart, I.M.S.



Disembarkation was completed before dawn. While it was still too dark for artillery observation by the enemy the Battalion assembled in a covered position behind the line held by the 29th Brigade, of which it now formed a part. The 14th September was spent in reconnoitring, and on the 15th the Battalion took over the trenches previously held by the 2/10th Gurkhas, a company of Australian Infantry, and the machine-guns of the whole Indian Brigade less those of the 14th Sikhs.

At this time there were on the Peninsular thirteen British, Australian, and New Zealand Divisions, two French Divisions, and one Indian Brigade. The bulk of these troops held an area stretching from just south of Anzac Cove to about three miles north-east of Suvla Bay, while the remainder held the end of the Peninsular from Cape Helles to the town of Krithia. The situation was unsatisfactory, for the troops at Anzac Cove and Suvla Bay were held up by the Turkish troops defending Sari Bair and the hills to the north of Sari Bair, while the troops at the end of the Peninsular were similarly held up by the Turks defending Achi Baba.

The campaign had now lasted nearly five months. It had been fought under the greatest difficulties. The troops had never had enough artillery or shells to ensure success. Adequate reinforcements had always been lacking. Most of the troops had been raised since the beginning of the war, and were not properly trained. For these and other reasons, strategical and geographical, our troops had never been able to push far inland. The Turks, from their positions on higher ground, were able to overlook

and command with fire the whole of our areas, even the sea beaches. By daylight no ships could approach the shore without coming under heavy artillery fire. On land no movement could be made that was not in full view of the Turks. At Anzac the beaches were actually under the enemy's rifle-fire.

There were no houses and no roads. For months our troops had had to live in the trenches or in holes scraped in the rocky ground. They were constantly under fire, and could get no real rest at all. Food was bad and drinking-water scarce and hard to obtain.

When, early in September, the Battalion arrived at Anzac a great British attack had just failed. The Governments of England and France had begun to despair of success. It was clear that the attack could not be renewed with any hope of success unless the army on the Peninsular could be heavily reinforced with men and guns. At the same time every possible man and gun was needed in France or in other theatres of war. To help Serbia another campaign had just been started. Winter was approaching, and with it would come bad weather and storms. It was doubtful whether, in such conditions, the army on the Peninsular could be supplied from the sea with food and munitions.

In addition to all this the Germans had just conquered Roumania and so gained touch with Turkey by railway. This enabled them to pour munitions into Turkey, and, should they wish, to send an army to help the Turks. For these reasons it was decided not to renew the attack, but simply to hold on to the ground already captured. The

Gallipoli

Turks also adopted a policy of passive resistance at this time. They made no attempt to drive the British army off the Peninsular.

All this explains why the Battalion took part in no great battle in this campaign. It simply shared in the defence of the trenches in the Anzac Cove area.

For the first three weeks after its arrival the Battalion was in the front line without relief. Very heavy work was carried out, both in improving the existing trenches (which were too narrow, undercut, and much below the standard of those in France) and in digging a new line across a re-entrant in our trenches.

During work on the latter Captain Gardiner was severely wounded by a stray bullet.

For the most part the enemy's trenches were even nearer to ours here than were those in France, and in some places only a few yards separated the two front lines from one another.

The heat was considerable. Flies were very bad, and many men fell victims to dysentery, a disease that was very prevalent owing to bad water and poor food. Captain C. D. Roe and many of the men were invalided owing to this disease.

The periods of rest were spent in shallow dug-outs cut into the banks of ravines leading to the beach. These rest areas the enemy kept under almost constant rifle and shell fire, and our casualties when resting were always higher than those we suffered in the trenches. It was very different in this respect from France, where we had usually rested in houses out of range of any but the enemy's heavy guns.

The chief amusement and relaxation was afforded by sea bathing—when the Turks were kind enough to allow it. It was amusing to see the British and Gurkha officers and men hurrying ashore and scampering for cover in a state of nature when the Turks, having decided that they had bathed long enough, started to shell them.

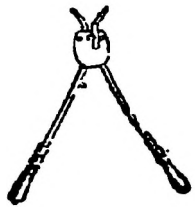
October passed without incident. Dysentery was still bad, and accounted for many sick, including Captain Harbord and 2nd Lieutenant Boileau, who were invalided to England. Lieutenant Dobbs was transferred to the 2/10th Gurkhas, together with the men of the Assam and Burma Military Police.

Soon after our arrival in Gallipoli the men of the 1/6th Gurkhas had been transferred to their own second battalion. This transfer, followed by that of the men of the Military Police, much reduced the strength of the Battalion. In spite of two drafts from the 2nd Battalion and depot at Bakloh, it now seldom exceeded 500 of all ranks.

Towards the end of October the weather became much cooler and the loss from dysentery smaller, but a new disease, jaundice, still accounted for a large number of sick.

Early in November storms commenced. These swept away the piers used for landing supplies, &c., so that rations and ammunition ran short until the damage could be repaired.

At the end of November a very severe and unexpectedly early blizzard swept the Peninsular, filling the trenches with water, ice and snow, and causing very great hardships to the exposed troops. The troops as a whole suffered considerable casualties



from cold and frost-bite. The Battalion, however, profiting by its experience during the previous winter in France, suffered very little in comparison with the other troops, its total losses from frost-bite being only six per cent of the losses of the Brigade from this cause. This low incidence of frost-bite in the Battalion was due mainly to the Quartermaster, Lieutenant Giles, who was untiring and most successful in his efforts to obtain extra clothing, blankets, and outsize boots for the men.

Immediately after this blizzard the Battalion took over Hill 60 from the 1/6th Gurkhas, a position in the closest contact with the enemy. In many parts of this line a few yards only separated the British trenches from those of the Turks, the latter everywhere holding the commanding ground. The trenches were so close to each other, in fact, that operations above ground were impossible and our activities were confined to bombing and mining.

The mining was carried out under the direction of the men of the Welsh Horse (mostly miners), and the men soon picked up the rudiments of the work. From them we also learned the useful trick of smothering a bomb with a blanket stretched on wire. This expedient was a pleasant alternative to racing a bomb down a mine shaft, a race, unfortunately, often won by the bomb! Losses were inevitable, however, and this form of warfare called for a high state of discipline, for hard work and unfailing cheerfulness.

The men made great friends with those of the Welsh Horse, the latter evincing a great partiality for chupattis, which they declared to be excellent

food for miners, and with which the men used to regale them when their spell in the mine galleries was over. The Turks were no less active than ourselves in mining operations. For the most part, however, we held the advantage and were able to blow in most of the enemy's shafts before they could become too dangerous.

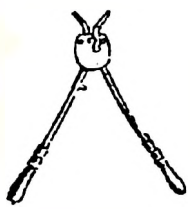
On the 3rd December, Lieutenant-Colonel H. F. Bateman-Champain received orders to proceed to Mudros on special duty, and command of the Battalion devolved on Captain L. P. Collins, D.S.O. The following day Lieutenant C. C. E. Manson, M.C., I.A.R.O., was killed by a sniper while employed in sketching the trenches.

A few days later the Battalion was relieved by the 1/5th Gurkhas and withdrew to trenches in rear to rest. Almost immediately, however, it received orders to return to the front line, and took over from the 14th Sikhs a part of the line in the vicinity of Susak Kuyu, just to the left of that previously occupied.

Meanwhile secret orders had been issued for the evacuation of the Peninsular at an early date, and the Battalion had been chosen as one of those to remain to the last to cover the embarkation, and, if necessary, to hold off the enemy.

In the course of the next few days all non-combatants and sick were evacuated, and then, with a similar number of the 1/5th Gurkhas on our right and the Highland Mounted Brigade on our left, four hundred picked men of the Battalion commenced to await the 19th of the month, the date fixed for the final withdrawal from Anzac.

In all circumstances a withdrawal from close



contact with an enemy is a difficult operation. In this case the difficulties were far greater than usual. The whole of the areas held by our troops were completely overlooked at short range by the enemy. Hostile aeroplanes constantly patrolled our lines. Enormous quantities of ammunition, equipment, and supplies had to be loaded into boats and thus transferred to ships, or to be destroyed. The bulk of the troops and guns, too, had to be carried to the ships in boats.

The most elaborate measures were taken to deceive the Turks. By day troops moved about as usual. Supplies and even animals were landed, only to be removed again as soon as it was dark. Mock reliefs of the troops in the trenches were carried out. In every battery position one gun was left to fire occasionally. To show how every detail received attention we quote from the operation order: "Even the immemorial custom of British troops of walking about on skylines will not be dispensed with entirely." All this by day. By night there was as little firing as possible so that the enemy might become accustomed to silent trenches in front of them.

The last few days on the Peninsular were a severe trial of the nerves of the rear-guard. One and all, however, entered whole-heartedly into the spirit of the operations, and many ingenious methods were invented for deceiving the Turks as to our strength and intentions. What appeared to appeal most to all ranks was the unrestricted licence to destroy all Government property which could not be removed —and no questions asked.

When day dawned on the 20th December all

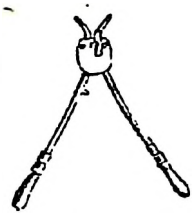
troops, guns, and stores, except the rear-guard, that were to be evacuated had been removed in safety. All was ready for the final withdrawal that evening.

Shortly after dawn the enemy opened on Hill 60 the most severe bombardment we had yet experienced on the Peninsular. Hill 60 was now occupied by the 1/5th Gurkhas, but the right of our own line came in for some attention too. The bombardment appeared ominous. There must have been few who did not realise that if, as seemed probable, this was the prelude to an attack on the commanding position of Hill 60, the prospects of leaving the Peninsular alive were small. The bombardment died down, however, and no attack followed. The Turks were still in ignorance of the situation.

At last darkness fell. From each battalion of the rear-guard a party of 200 men slipped away to the beach and quietly embarked. These were followed at intervals of three hours by further parties of 150 men and 50 men each, leaving but a few scouts in the trenches. Then the scouts, having fixed into position automatically set rifles, timed to go off at irregular intervals, followed to the boats, and the evacuation was successfully and bloodlessly accomplished. It was not until some time after dawn on the 21st that the enemy discovered that the British positions were no longer held.

The Battalion took part in no great battle on the Peninsular. That it was considered fit, however, to stand side by side in this last great crisis and danger with the splendid troops who had so gallantly borne the heat and burden of the campaign, is an honour of which we can always be proud.

Gallipoli



The Battalion's casualties while on the Peninsular were as follows :—

Killed.—2nd Lieutenant C. C. E. Manson, M.C., I.A.R.O., and 6 Gurkha other ranks.

Wounded.—Captain W. A. Gardiner; Lieutenant W. Ross-Stewart, I.M.S. (attached); Subadar Balbir Chettri, Burma Military Police (attached); Jemadar Harjit Thapa, 2/2nd Gurkhas (attached); and 102 Gurkha other ranks.

The following individual awards were made for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty :—

ORDER OF BRITISH INDIA.

Subadar Nain Sing Gurung.

INDIAN DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL.

No. 4098 Havildar Amar Sing Pun.
No. 4620 Havildar Lokbir Ale.

BREVET MAJORITY.

Captain L. P. Collins, D.S.O.

MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

Lieutenant-Colonel H. F. Bateman-Champain.
Captain L. P. Collins, D.S.O.
Captain J. R. Hartwell.
No. 4016 Havildar Ragbir Thapa.

For its services in the campaign the Regiment was awarded the Battle Honour " Gallipoli."

From the Peninsular the Battalion was carried to the small island of Imbros, a few miles from Gallipoli. Here it was inspected by General Birdwood, commanding at Anzac, and complimented on its steadiness and good conduct while under his command.

On the 23rd December 1915 the Battalion embarked for Mudros, a larger island in the same area, where it was transferred to the steamship *El Kahira* bound for Alexandria. The Battalion arrived in Alexandria on the 28th December and then proceeded by train to Suez, where it encamped.

At Suez most of the Indian Brigade from the Peninsular was concentrated. Here the Battalion rested for a fortnight and reorganised, being joined by a draft from India under Lieutenant Brunlees of the 2nd Battalion, and another draft of those men of the 2nd Battalion who had been serving hitherto with the 1/1st Gurkhas.

The Battalion was then transferred to the 31st Indian Brigade at El Shatt, on the east bank of the canal, and on the 27th January 1916 moved out some four miles into the desert to Gebel Murr. At this place a defensive position and railhead was being established.

On the 1st February, Captain Collins handed over command of the Battalion to Major A. B. Tillard, D.S.O., 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles.

The Battalion worked at the defences of Gebel Murr until the 12th February. On that day the Battalion returned to El Shatt, and two days later embarked for India on H.M. Transport *Ekma,* leaving a large draft of the 2nd Battalion, under Lieutenant Brunlees, to proceed immediately to Mesopotamia to join its own Battalion.

On the 2nd March 1916 the Battalion marched back into Bakloh.

The following British officers returned with the Battalion from field service :—

Major A. B. Tillard, D.S.O., commanding.
Bt. Major L. P. Collins, D.S.O.
Capt. J. R. Hartwell, Adjutant.
Lieut. R. V. Brandon, 18th Infantry.
Lieut. A. W. Woodhead, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. H. E. Giles, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. S. G. Mellis-Smith, I.A.R.O.
Lieut. W. Ross-Stewart, I.M.S.

CHAPTER XII.

2ND BATTALION.

The Outbreak of War, 1914
Kohat and the Kurram, 1914-15

THE outbreak of the War found the 2nd Battalion at Bakloh. The disappointment was great when, on the 8th August, it was definitely made known that the Battalion, as such, would not form part of the Indian Expeditionary Force. Its immediate duty, however, was to supply drafts to the 1st Battalion of the 1st King George's Own Gurkha Rifles (whose 2nd Battalion was in Chitral) and to its own 1st Battalion in order to bring them up to full field strength.

The detachment to make up the strength of the 1st Battalion consisted of 8 Gurkha officers, 23 non-commissioned officers, and 305 riflemen, while the 1/1st Gurkhas took 8 Gurkha officers, 25 non-commissioned officers, and 137 riflemen. In all, between August 1914 and February 1915 the Battalion supplied more than 900 Gurkha officers, non-commissioned officers, and men as reinforcements for the 1st Battalion and other regiments in France, while a large number of British officers left the Battalion with drafts and on other war-time employment.

Thus, by the 12th August 1914, the 2nd Battalion

found itself reduced to 400 rank and file, with Colonel Hutchinson in command and very few British officers remaining. Its strength was soon augmented, however; several British officers rejoined; men recalled from furlough returned without delay, and ninety reservists, out of a total of one hundred, came in almost immediately. One and all, in spite of the unsettling atmosphere of excitement, at once settled down to reorganise the depleted ranks of the Battalion.

It was a disturbing period. None knew where he might be in a few days' time; there were constant comings and goings; orders were received and countermanded. The time of year was perhaps the worst for mobilisation on a war footing, for a large number of the rank and file were on furlough in Nepal, and the rains had broken. The most extravagant rumours were rife, and none knew for certain how the frontier tribes, even perhaps India itself, would react to the greatest event in history.

It was a relief when, in the beginning of November 1914, the Battalion was ordered to Kohat for garrison duty. It marched from Bakloh on the 7th November and arrived at Kohat on the 11th. At the beginning of December the Kohat Moveable Column, of which the Battalion formed part, proceeded to Thal in the Kurram Valley to be ready to deal with a threatening situation in Afghanistan. No trouble developed, however, and the Column dispersed later, leaving the Battalion to garrison Thal.

The Battalion spent the next fourteen months at Kohat and in the Kurram Valley.

It was during this period that the Battalion

The Outbreak of War, 1914
Kohat and the Kurram, 1914-15

started its close friendship with the 37th Dogras (now the 1st Prince of Wales's Own Battalion of the 17th Dogra Regiment), a friendship which was cemented later in Mesopotamia where the two battalions served in the same Brigade and fought side by side in the line, and later still in Waziristan.

While in the Kohat Brigade several officers joined the Battalion. Among these were the following :—

2nd Lieutenants E. H. Hunter and A. S. Fletcher, who were killed in 1915 when serving with the 5th Gurkhas in Gallipoli.
2nd Lieutenant H. G. Allington, killed in 1917 when serving with the 9th Gurkhas in Mesopotamia.
2nd Lieutenant G. W. Thomas, killed in 1918 when serving with the 3rd Gurkhas in Palestine.

Mesopotamia, 1916-18, Part I. Tigris, 1916

On the 17th February 1916 the Battalion received orders to proceed to Mesopotamia for service with the Indian Expeditionary Force "D." It left Kohat by train on the 21st, arrived at Karachi about 5 P.M. on the 23rd, and set sail the same evening, having missed meeting the 1st Battalion, returning from Egypt, by less than twelve hours.

The following officers left Kohat with the Battalion :—

Lt.-Col. C. R. M. Hutchinson, Commanding,
Capt. F. S. Massy, 2nd in Command,
Capt. H. E. W. Bell-Kingsley, Adjutant,
Lieut. E. M. Dennys,
Lieut. C. G. Borrowman,
Lieut. N. H. Rogers, Quartermaster,
2nd Lieut. L. C. J. B. Walton,
2nd Lieut. A. C. de Clermont, I.A.R.O.,
2nd Lieut. A. R. Nye, I.A.R.O.,
2nd Lieut. A. T. Davies, I.A.R.O.,
2nd Lieut. G. W. Thomas,
Capt. H. A. H. Robson, I.M.S. ;
also Subadar-Major Debi Chand and 16 other Gurkha Officers.

The voyage, though uneventful, was of the greatest interest to the men, practically none of whom had seen the sea before. They were entirely at a loss to understand how the ship was navigated without any kind of landmarks or routes. When flying-fish or porpoises were met with there was a general rush to gaze upon them with amazement.

The Battalion arrived at Basra on the 29th February, and disembarked the next day. There were no docks or landing-stages; transports were moored to the palm trees, or to Arab boats tied to the shore. Troops disembarked into deep sticky mud, and all supplies had to be manhandled under very difficult conditions, but all was accomplished with the utmost good-humour and the Battalion went into camp at Margil in a palm grove near the river.

When the Battalion arrived in Mesopotamia British and Indian troops had been in that country for about sixteen months. The initial operations had been undertaken to protect the Anglo-Persian oil-fields and to occupy the country round the head of the Persian Gulf. Basra and Qurna were occupied in the last months of 1914, and by July 1915 Amara and Nasiriya had also fallen before the British advance.

The Government and Army Headquarters in India, then directing the general operations, had later adopted a more ambitious plan of campaign. The 6th Indian Division, under General Townshend, was to capture Kut, and then, if conditions seemed favourable, to advance up the Tigris to Baghdad. The first phase of these operations was successful,

Mesopotamia, 1916-18, Part I. Tigris, 1916

and by the end of September 1915 Kut had been occupied. During November the advance on Baghdad was commenced. The story of Townshend's failure is well known. He failed to defeat the Turks at Ctesiphon near Baghdad, retired to Kut, and by the 7th December 1915 was invested therein by the Turks. Turkish troops advanced down the river, and, though driven back at a cost of huge British casualties from Sheikh Saad in January and Hanna by the beginning of April, remained firmly established in strong positions at Sannaiyat and Bait Isa.

The attack in which the Battalion was shortly to take a part was in the nature of a last desperate effort to break through the Turkish line at Sannaiyat, some fifteen miles east of Kut, and so make possible the relief of Kut.

The Battalion spent March 1916 at Basra, as part of the 41st Brigade, engaged in fatigues, training, and reorganisation.

During this period Major A. E. Sealy, as 2nd in Command, and Lieutenant L. H. Brunlees rejoined the Battalion, as well as a draft which had been sent under the latter officer to the 1st Battalion in Egypt.

At the end of March the Left Wing of the Battalion left Basra and moved up by river to Sheikh Saad, a village about ten miles behind the firing line, where it arrived some five days later. Of the Right Wing, "A" Company left Basra on the 1st April, and Battalion Headquarters and "B" Company on the 2nd April, disembarking at Wadi, some seven miles above Sheikh Saad, on the 6th and 7th April respectively and returning to Sheikh Saad

to join the Left Wing. Almost immediately, on the 9th April, the Battalion as a whole moved up to Wadi, where it spent a week building jetties for the wounded and carrying out other duties in connection with the clearing of the Hanna battlefield.

The Battalion then moved on, *via* Fallahiya, to a post south of the river called Twin Canals, where it arrived on the 17th April. Here it was posted to the 35th Brigade under Brigadier-General Rice; when this officer died of cholera early in May the Brigade was taken over by Brigadier-General W. M. Thomson, M.C. The 35th Brigade, with which the Battalion remained for the rest of its service in Mesopotamia, had been reduced by casualties and sickness to about 750 rifles, and the arrival of the Battalion more than doubled its strength. The Brigade was now made up of the 2/4th Gurkhas and remnants of the following battalions :—

1/4th Hampshire Regiment, 1/5th Buffs,	Composite Territorial Battalion.
37th Dogras, 41st Dogras,	Composite Dogra Battalion.
97th Infantry, 102nd Grenadiers.	

On the 20th April the Brigade moved back to Fallahiya, where the Battalion received hurried instruction in bomb-throwing from an officer and some men of the Dogras, in preparation for the attack on Sannaiyat.

At this time the Turkish line covering the investment of Kut ran as follows. On the left bank of the Tigris lay the strong Sannaiyat position, its flanks protected by the river and the Suwaikiya

Mesopotamia, 1916-18, Part I. Tigris, 1916

Marsh. On the right bank the Turks held the Chahela position, having been driven from the forward Bait Isa position by the 3rd Division on the 17th and 18th April. In rear was the Es Sinn position, running from Atab on the River Hai, through Dujaila and the Sinn Banks, and thence across the River Tigris to the Suwada Marsh.

After the attack at Bait Isa no further progress could be made on the right bank. The position of the Kut garrison was now desperate; food was practically finished and the men were half starved. It was therefore decided that the only chance of gaining the immediate success so essential if Kut was to be saved lay in attacking Sannaiyat.

The initial assault of the Sannaiyat line was carried out on the 22nd April by the 7th Division, the 35th Brigade being in reserve ready to pass through the assaulting brigades and to advance to within some eight miles of Kut.

The 2/4th Gurkhas had rather a special interest in the relief of General Townshend's troops in Kut. Had not the Battalion formed part of the relief column which, in 1895, had gone to the rescue of British troops in Chitral—amongst whom had been Townshend, then a captain?

Unfortunately the assault on Sannaiyat was a failure. The Turks had flooded the ground, and as our troops floundered forward through a regular quagmire of mud and water, sinking up to their armpits in places, they suffered tremendous casualties. After nearly 1300 casualties had been incurred the attack broke down, and the 35th Brigade was not employed. The Battle Honour "Tigris, 1916," was

therefore awarded to the Regiment only because the 2nd Battalion was present during the last phases of the gallant attempts to raise the siege of Kut.

Five days later a last effort to carry stores to the beleaguered garrison was made. A lightly armed steamer attempted to force its way up the river. The Turks, however, had stretched a cable across at a point which they could cover with field-guns; the ship was captured and most of the crew killed.

On the 29th April, General Townshend surrendered the garrison of Kut. Among the 12,000 men who thus fell into Turkish hands as prisoners of war was Shiam Sing Thapa, son of Honorary Captain Rannu Thapa. After his release in 1918 he enlisted in the 1st Battalion, of which he became Subadar-Major in 1934.

After the surrender of Kut both forces, exhausted by their hardships and casualties, remained comparatively inactive until December 1916. The general situation during this period changed in one important respect, however. In the middle of May the Turks withdrew from their forward position on the right bank of the Tigris to a position covering Kut astride the River Hai. The British accordingly advanced on this bank to occupy a forward line from Magasis to the Dujaila Redoubt, and later occupied an advanced post at Imam al Mansur.

On the 12th May the 35th Brigade joined a new division, the 14th, formed of the 35th, 36th, and 37th Brigades, under Major-General R. G. Egerton.

During the summer and autumn of 1916 the Battalion was employed at various posts in the desert south of the river, most of the time being spent at Magasis.

Mesopotamia, 1916-18, Part I. Tigris, 1916

At first the conditions were appalling, and all were made to realise the full truth of the Arab proverb: "When Allah had made Hell he found it was not bad enough. So he made Iraq . . . and added flies." The plague of flies was almost incredible. Flies swarmed in their thousands in the top of every tent, and each movement would set them swirling and buzzing in a sickening cloud. Flies settled maddeningly on sweat-caked hands and face, and nothing could drive them off. A mouthful of food would become black with the pests on its way from plate to mouth. There was no escape. As the heat increased the flies died off—only to be replaced by an even greater number of sand-flies. Sleep at night became impossible and work by day a torture.

Transport was both primitive and scarce. As a result, clothes were unobtainable and rations were bad. By August many of the men had worn out their clothes and were dressed in improvised trousers made of sackcloth. There was much sickness. Owing to the lack of green food scurvy broke out—during three months no less than 316 men of the Battalion were evacuated from this cause alone—while the presence of cholera among the troops did little to soothe nerves that were already over-tried. Medical arrangements were inadequate and the horrors attending evacuation down-river were indescribable. During June, July, and August nearly 35,000 officers and men were invalided out of the force. At one time the Battalion was reduced to less than 300, and most of those only fit for hospital.

The countryside, too, had few charms to offer.

For mile upon mile the flat sandy plain stretched away into the distance, shimmering under the intense heat. Away from the river there was little vegetation, but here and there a patch of scrub would mark the position of some marsh or bog, reminder of the inundation that would come with the rainy season. Irrigation canals that were almost as old as the country itself wound along beside the military roads of the last year.

Away across the river the solitary minaret of Kut rose in pathetic challenge to the skies. Closer by an occasional mound would show where a village lay buried beneath the moving soil of the desert, or perhaps a ridge would stand out, crowned by its recent fortifications, in the evening light. There was little else to break the monotony of the horizon.

In this uninviting land the Battalion marched, trained, and laboured grimly at constructing fortifications and roads.

There were occasional moments of excitement, however. During May, when the Brigade was in camp at Twin Canals, fatigue parties were sent by the different battalions to get water from the river. The Battalion's water party, consisting of four A.T. carts and fifteen pack-mules with an escort of an N.C.O. and nine men, went separately from the others, and on its return journey it was ambushed by Arabs. The pack-mules stampeded at once. Thirteen of them were never seen again, while six of the cart mules were killed. Our casualties were one Gurkha other rank and one drabi killed, and one drabi wounded. One of the Arabs was killed. He was found to be dressed in a British khaki-drill

jacket and armed with a service revolver and ammunition !

Early in June the Turks, firing 5.9 howitzers, exploded two ammunition barges near Fallahiya. It was an awe-inspiring sight, plainly visible from the Battalion's camp.

Aeroplanes were quite frequent visitors. Our Air Force was at first composed of slow and antiquated machines. It was not supplied with up-to-date planes until September, and in the meantime the patrols had to go up in pairs if they wished to have any chance of getting home. The Turks had a number of very efficient Fokkers, of which they made good use for bombing and observation work. One day in August the Battalion watched an aerial battle. One of the Fokkers had been making a particular nuisance of itself. It came over, was engaged by two of our planes, and at once retired. It reappeared about twenty minutes later, however, was engaged by a single British machine, and was brought down. The pilot managed to land his own side of the river, but his aeroplane was destroyed by artillery fire.

In August, General Maude succeeded General Lake in command of the force.

In September things began to improve slightly. It became a little cooler, and drafts from the 1st Battalion and the 2nd Battalion Depot began to arrive from India; large numbers of men who had been evacuated to hospitals during the summer also returned. Training, which had been almost abandoned during the previous three months, was recommenced. Rations improved somewhat, and clothing began to come up on the light railway which

ran from Shaikh Saad to Sinn. Several concert parties from battalions in India came to tour the area, and their efforts were much appreciated, a certain jazz band item being specially applauded by the Gurkhas. A weekly concert party was also given by the 1/5th Buffs, who were in camp near-by. The most popular attraction was a travelling cinematograph of the Y.M.C.A., which introduced Charlie Chaplin to the men, who became regular fans of the " Bioscope," as they called it.

October found the Battalion at the Dujaila Redoubt, where it remained till the end of November. More drafts arrived, there were plenty of men for the work, and consequently proper training could at last be undertaken. The men began to feel once more that they were soldiers rather than labourers.

Dujaila is about eight miles to the east of Kut. It is a conspicuous landmark, for it rises between forty and fifty feet above the plain and is the only mound for miles around. It is double-headed. Many thousands of years ago, perhaps, the first two villages were built on this site. These were destroyed or deserted, and the sand of the desert swept up and covered them. Then fresh villages were built on the same positions, and so on. Close by ran the Dujaila depression, a shallow winding river-bed which was in fact the old bed of the Tigris. This was now dry, but water could be found by digging.

Dujaila was a military position of some importance. The redoubt was on the extreme left flank of the British line, and in the event of an attack it was to be held to the last. October and most of November

were spent in digging trenches, erecting a maze of wire, and generally preparing the place for a long defence.

The Battalion spent its spare time in hunting elusive Arab raiders, without much success. One Arab woman was captured by a patrol, also a cow. The latter proved very useful, and followed the Battalion until it left for Salonica.

The only casualties during this period were caused by another unit operating in the vicinity. This, owing to a fault in direction, peppered the camp liberally one day, killing one rifleman and wounding a transport daffadar.

Towards the end of November the Battalion left Dujaila and moved to a camp between Magasis and Sinn, where it took part in ten days' intensive training with the Brigade. Some of the surplus kit had already been sent down to Shaikh Saad, and it was felt that things would soon begin to move again.

During the seven months since the fall of Kut the dispositions of the opposing forces had changed little, but the general situation had altered very materially. In April 1916 the British forces had been weakened by casualties and hardships and demoralised by failure and the breakdown of their lines of communication. By December a very different state of affairs existed. Communications were secure ; medical services, transport, and supplies had all been reorganised, and our forces were both morally and numerically superior to the enemy. All were eager to wipe out the slur of the Kut disaster. General Maude was ready to commence his advance.

Mesopotamia, 1916-18, Part I. Tigris, 1916

The British plan was to advance west across the Hai River, to drive out the Turks from the right bank of the Tigris to well above Kut, and then to strike at their communications by forcing a crossing of the Tigris. These operations commenced on the 13th December.

The Battalion spent the first half of December occupying the forward line from the river-bank near Magasis. This consisted of a series of strong posts running in a salient towards Imam al Mansur. The right flank of this position was within sniping distance of the enemy on the left bank of the river, though the whole position was about two miles from the Turkish outposts covering the Khudhaira Bend on the right bank of the river near Kut. Some shots were exchanged with enemy piquets on the other bank, but the chief occupations were strengthening the positions at night and patrolling towards the Khudhaira Bend.

Lieutenant Harrison took out a patrol one night to locate a Turkish piquet south of the river. The enemy piquet suddenly made its presence known by a burst of fire at fifty yards range. Lieutenant Harrison was in front with a certain rifleman noted for his corpulency, and both went flat in the approved manner. A few moments later the rifleman had successfully progressed the hundred yards back to the patrol—having, it was rumoured, rolled the entire way !

Mesopotamia, 1916-18, Part I. Kut al Amara, 1917

On the 13th December the main operations commenced. By this time sickness had accounted for many of the officers who had been with the Battalion

in March. Of thirteen officers who had joined the Battalion since March three had left again before December—Major A. E. Sealy (to command the 1st Battalion), Captain R. A. K. Wilson, and 2nd Lieutenant R. J. A. Fell, and there were now the following British officers present with the Battalion :—

Lt.-Col. C. R. M. Hutchinson, Commanding.
Major G. A. Perreau, 2nd in Command.
Capt. H. St G. Scott, D.S.O.
Lieut. N. H. Rogers, Adjutant.
Lieut. L. H. Brunlees.
2nd Lieut. W. R. W. Weallens.
2nd Lieut. C. T. Tirebuck.
2nd Lieut. A. M. L. Harrison.
2nd Lieut. A. W. Woodhead, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. S. G. Mellis-Smith, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. A. C. de Clermont, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. C. H. Bristow, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. A. R. Nye, I.A.R.O.
Lieut. A. Y. Dabholkar, I.M.S.

Captain H. E. W. Bell-Kingsley had left the Battalion on appointment as Staff Captain of the 35th Brigade.

Early on the morning of the 13th December the Battalion, from its position near Magasis, had a distant view of a heavy bombardment of the Turkish trenches at Sannaiyat, ten miles away. This bombardment, designed to mislead the Turks as to the British plan, heralded the start of the British offensive. That night, the 13th-14th, the 13th Division and the Cavalry Division crossed the Hai at Basrugiya to occupy by the 17th a position astride this river at Kala Haji Fahan.

For many days and nights the Battalion knew little rest. During the 14th and 15th patrols were sent out to reconnoitre the Khudhaira Bend ; these

ascertained that the bend was strongly held. On the night 15th-16th the 35th Brigade (which now contained the 1/5th Buffs, 37th Dogras, 102nd Grenadiers, and 2/4th Gurkhas) advanced to a line nearer this position, and the Battalion was busily engaged consolidating this line under the fire of snipers and machine-guns for two nights.

During the night 17th-18th the Battalion was relieved by the Manchesters of the 3rd Division, and, in accordance with the general scheme of advance, moved with its Brigade across the Hai to Besouia. The men were dog-tired and most of them slept as they marched; at one halt the C.O. stopped, but unfortunately the Battalion did not until it was rudely awakened by a volley of oaths from the C.O., over whose now recumbent form the men were continuing to make their drowsy progress! The rear party, under Major Perreau, missed the way to Besouia and in the darkness marched through a wide gap in the line and proceeded cheerfully towards the Turkish positions near the Tigris. Realising that they were lost they went forward carefully, and, on topping a rise, were horrified to see the river shimmering in front and the outskirts of Kut on the other side. They had walked through a gap in the Turkish line as well! Needless to say, they retraced their steps even more cautiously than they had advanced.

At last, just as daylight was approaching, the final halt was ordered. The men dropped to sleep where they fell out, but not for long. At 8 A.M. the Battalion and the Buffs were again on the move, to support the Cavalry Division which had been

ordered to shell the boat bridge across the Tigris at the Shumran Bend. This bridge was of some importance because it constituted the Turkish main river crossing. Although the Battalion did not make contact with the enemy troops, it came under the fire of some Turkish " pip squeaks," and Lieutenant Woodhead was wounded in the chest and two men were hit. In the afternoon the Battalion withdrew to bivouacs to get, at last, a well-earned sleep.

On the 20th the Battalion, together with the rest of the 35th Brigade, again co-operated with the cavalry division in a gallant but unsuccessful first attempt to cross the Tigris. " A " Company, under Lieutenant Nye, was engaged for about two hours in a long-range fire fight with the enemy, but later the whole force was withdrawn. " A " Company had one man wounded, the only casualty in the Battalion. The Brigade had a tiring day, for it did not reach its bivouacs until 10.45 P.M., having marched at 7 A.M.

On the 23rd December the Battalion, as part of the 35th Brigade, crossed the Hai River and marched four miles east to Atab, whence, on the next day, it moved out into the desert to support the cavalry division in the destruction of Gassab's Fort. Gassab's Fort was the stronghold of the Arab marauders whose daring raids on camps and convoys had been a perpetual worry. The cavalry burned the fort, while the Battalion, in a somewhat somnolent state, watched the proceedings from a nullah, returning to Atab in the evening. The Brigade bivouac at Besouia was reached at 10 A.M. on Christmas Day.

Christmas Day, 1916, was not a great success in the Officers' Mess. Several of the officers were feeling off colour, and the eagerly awaited English mail failed to arrive. One bottle of champagne between twelve officers did not entirely relieve the depression.

On Boxing Day the weather broke, and rain, the first for many months, came down in torrents. Despite all efforts at draining, the Brigade bivouac area very soon became a bog, and a few days later it had to be shifted to higher ground. In just over a week the Hai River rose from a mere trickle of a few inches to a swirling unfordable mass of water some fifty yards across. New Year's Eve was a red letter day; the tents arrived to replace the soaking bivouacs.

The week following Christmas was thus a very uncomfortable one. The troops had suffered from heat and dust-storms all the summer; now they had a taste of chilly rain and mud. The rain affected the transport on the line of communications; mud frequently held up trains on the light railway to Sinn, while in advance of Sinn camels and lorries were immobilised. Consequently rations again became scarce. Active operations were impossible at first, but the troops were kept hard at it fortifying the advanced line west of the Hai River.

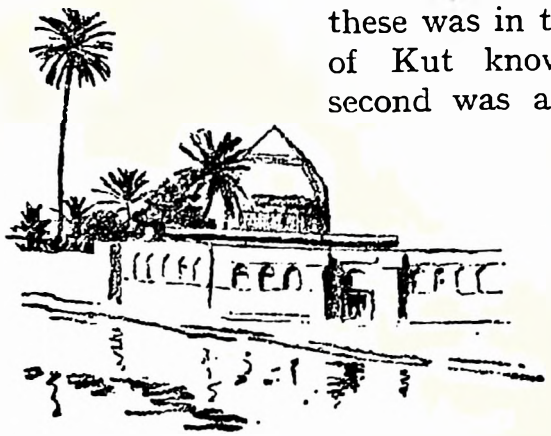
During this period Lieutenant-Colonel Hutchinson, who had commanded the Battalion since August 1914, fell sick, and eventually had to be evacuated to India seriously ill. He was bitterly disappointed at thus losing his opportunity of leading the Battalion into active operations at last, and those who had the

privilege of serving under him felt deep sympathy. Major Perreau took over the acting command. Lieutenant de Clermont also left the Battalion during this period, and the following officers joined: Major D. W. Maxwell, Captain E. C. Lentaigne, and Captain E. M. Dennys, as Adjutant.

At midnight on the 8th-9th January 1917 the Battalion, as part of the 35th Brigade, moved out from Besouia to take part in a demonstration towards the Shumran Bend, in co-operation with a raid by the Cavalry Division on Bughaila, the Turkish advanced base up the Tigris. These operations were intended to divert the attention of the Turks from a big attack by the 3rd Division on the Khudhaira Bend. The main attack was hampered by a heavy mist and met with only partial success. Owing to the mist and the flooded state of the country both the demonstration to Shumran and the raid on Bughaila had to be cancelled, and the Battalion, after a damp and chilly night, marched back to Besouia on the 9th.

This attack by the 3rd Division on the 9th January marked the beginning of a new phase of the operations.

The advances during December 1916 had carried forward and extended the British line from Magasis to Kala Haji Fahan on the River Hai and thence due west for about a mile. Early in January the Turkish forces south of the river were still holding their three main fortified positions. The first of these was in the bend of the river to the north-east of Kut known as the Khudhaira Bend. The second was astride the Hai River to the south of



Kut, and was known as the Hai Salient. This was the most important. The third covered the bends in the river to the west and north-west of Kut, known as the Shumran and Dahra Bends.

The British operations during January and most of February were to consist, therefore, in driving the Turks from these three positions. The Battalion was not destined to take much part in the first two phases—namely, the clearing of the Khudhaira Bend and the capture of the Hai Salient, but in the third phase, the clearing of the Dahra Bend and the subsequent operations across the river, it was to be heavily engaged. This last phase was not to commence until the 9th February.

On the 11th January the 35th Brigade moved up and took over part of the front line running west of the Hai River from Kala Haji Fahan, facing the Hai Salient. Here the line consisted of a system of lunettes and strong posts. The Battalion was on the left flank of the Brigade, where the line bent southwards at right angles away from the Hai Salient. Although not in close contact with the Turkish trenches, it was occasionally shelled, and was open to a certain amount of rifle-fire and sniping, losing one killed and two wounded.

The three weeks which the Battalion spent here and in the vicinity were mostly taken up with digging trenches. Fresh lunettes and strong posts had to be constructed and wired, communication trenches had to be dug, captured Turkish trenches had to be adapted and linked up with our own. The task seemed endless. Farther to the east the 3rd Division

was attacking in the Khudhaira Bend, which was cleared by the 19th January at a cost of over 1600 casualties; later, from the 25th January to the 3rd February, parts of the 13th and 14th Divisions were assaulting the Turkish trenches in the Hai Salient. These were cleared only after very heavy and gallant fighting, much of which was witnessed by the Battalion. At such a time it was heart-breaking to wield the spade rather than the sword.

About the middle of January it rained hard. The soil in the trenches under construction turned to mud, and the mud to glue, while water oozed gently but steadily into the dug-outs in which the men lived. To make life still more difficult most of the digging had to be done at night, under the fire of vigilant and enterprising Turkish snipers. In such conditions the Battalion laboured with its accustomed will and cheerfulness. There were, of course, some moments of excitement and of recreation.

On the 16th January a company of the 1/5th Buffs was detailed to advance the line some four hundred yards. It came under a withering fire from the enemy, and lost half its strength in casualties. "C" and "D" Companies of the Battalion were working on the left flank of this advance. They immediately went to the assistance of the Buffs, and, under a heavy fire, evacuated the wounded. They were subsequently commended by the Brigade Commander for their good work, while Naik Tikalal and Riflemen Lalsing, Dani Chand and Karan-bahadur were specially praised for their gallantry.

On the 18th January the Battalion was relieved by the Grenadiers and moved back into reserve to

a camp about a mile to the rear. It was a relief to be under canvas for a few days, and to obtain some rest and recreation, which included a little football.

The 22nd January found the Battalion back in the line again. The battle to clear the Hai Salient was about to begin. Although, as already stated, the Battalion took no part in the actual fighting, it was digging in the forward battle area almost every night and suffered several casualties during the next two weeks.

During the first few days of February the heavy attacks made on the Hai Salient reached their climax. On the night of the 2nd-3rd February the 35th Brigade and two brigades of the 13th Division were ordered to secure a line enclosing the Turks in the Dahra Bend. The selection and construction of untaped trenches in the dark and under continual fire proved no easy task.

On the night 3rd-4th February it was reported that the Turks had evacuated the last line of their trenches in the Hai Salient. That night two strong patrols under Lieutenants Brunlees and Mellis-Smith were sent out to ascertain the extent of the Turkish withdrawal. They advanced for about a mile before they came under heavy rifle and machine-gun fire, suffering a few casualties. These and other patrols ascertained that the Turks seemed to be holding a line from the Liquorice Factory to the southern end of the Shumran Bend. The Hai Salient was in British hands, though at a cost of nearly four thousand British casualties.

During the following night the whole Brigade was relieved and withdrew into Divisional Reserve,

where it spent three or four days in comparative quiet. The main occupations were dodging crumps, preparing a large supply of bombs for action, fishing, bathing, and, for the British officers, enjoying the two English mails which arrived.

On the 8th February the Battalion, after eleven months in Mesopotamia, received its first " fighting orders." It had arrived too late to take any active part in the gallant but abortive attempt to relieve Kut, and during the present offensive, which had now been in progress for nearly two months, its lot had been mostly to dig and carry. Nevertheless, digging and carrying are necessary operations and very vital to those in the front line, and when performed under fire and with repeated casualties are a great test of nerve and temper.

The next day, the 9th February, the Battalion moved up into the front-line trenches. These were unwired and very shallow, having been started only the previous night ; they did not give sufficient protection from the Turkish snipers, who were causing casualties nearly every minute.

While reconnoitring these trenches Captain Dennys, the Adjutant, was shot in the head by a sniper and killed. His death was felt as a personal loss by all ranks ; the Battalion could ill afford to lose such a popular and capable officer. Captain Rogers took over the duties of Adjutant. Subadar, later Honorary Lieutenant, Hari Sing was also wounded by shell-fire on the same day.

From where the Battalion was the Turkish line, five hundred yards ahead, was clearly visible over the flat open country which intervened. Driven

back from the Hai Salient, the Turks had occupied a large building, close to the confluence of the Hai River and the Tigris, known as the Liquorice Factory. From this point they had established a line of trenches running west across the Dahra Bend for nearly two miles, the line being continued thence to the Shumran Bend by a series of detached redoubts. The clearing of the Dahra Bend, which began with an attack by the 13th Division on the 9th February, was to be carried out by the 35th Brigade on the right and the 13th Division on the left.

In the general attack which was to take place on the 10th the Battalion's job was to capture 250 yards of trench opposite its front, and then to work to the right with bombers towards the Liquorice Factory.

At 8.20 on the morning of the 10th February there was a short but intensive bombardment by our guns and trench-mortars, and then, under the cover of a three minutes' barrage, the Battalion and the Buffs went over the top. "C" and "D" Companies were leading, the whole in lines of half companies fifty yards apart. The Battalion reached its objective almost unopposed, as the Turks had abandoned their trenches in the vicinity, leaving only a few snipers. The Battalion then commenced to consolidate. The Battalion bombers, under Lieutenant Harrison, moved up the trenches towards the Liquorice Factory, which was shortly afterwards occupied by the 36th Brigade.

Lieutenant Mellis-Smith, advancing up another trench with his runner, encountered a number of Turks in a redoubt. He at once bombed his way

into the redoubt, capturing two Turkish officers and seventeen men. For this gallant action he was recommended for the M.C., but unfortunately was killed the next day.

Consolidation was enlivened by the attentions of Turkish snipers, with whose persistence and skill the Battalion had by now become unpleasantly familiar. On this occasion they were hampered by a severe dust-storm and only inflicted a few casualties, but these included Lieutenant Bristow, who was wounded in the foot and later had to have his foot amputated, and Captain Harvey, the Brigade Major, who was killed; Captain Bell-Kingsley was appointed Brigade Major in his place.

In the evening the Battalion was ordered to advance a further thousand yards and to wheel left and occupy a line at right angles to the river. "C" and "D" Companies accordingly advanced up two parallel communication trenches. When they emerged from these they came under heavy and effective fire, which threatened them with severe casualties. Major Scott at once decided to evacuate the casualties, withdraw, and then advance again by a circuitous route under cover of the river "bund." The Turks were thus outflanked and withdrew from their position. Nightfall found the Battalion in possession of all its objectives, the casualties for the whole day having been very slight. The Battalion was congratulated by the Brigadier on its day's work, and general satisfaction was felt by all at the complete success of the Battalion's first important action.

The night was spent in digging, with the welcome assistance of a large party of Sappers and 128th

Pioneers. There was a little sniping from across the river, but all was fairly quiet. The other side of the river and a little down-stream the walls of Kut were plainly visible in the moonlight—a sad reminder of the fate of the late British garrison, whose sufferings in captivity were just becoming known.

At dawn on the 11th two patrols under Jemadars Siriparsad and Chamu went out, and returned with an accurate report of the Turkish positions. The Turks were found to have withdrawn during the night in order to shorten their front.

Shortly before mid-day the Right Wing, under Major Maxwell, was ordered to advance about eight hundred yards to a deep nullah running at right angles to the river. There was no serious infantry opposition, but fairly heavy casualties were caused by enfilade artillery fire from Kut. Major Maxwell and Captain Brunlees were both wounded in the chest during this advance, and Lieutenant Tirebuck took over command. The enemy artillery had the range of the nullah, and " A " Company, established therein, lost over twenty-five men in a few minutes. Not much of a birthday party for Lieutenant Tirebuck, whose twenty-first birthday it happened to be! Fortunately a heavy dust-storm arose, which obscured the observation of the Turkish gunners and thus eased the situation considerably.

Meanwhile the Left Wing was having a fairly quiet time farther back. During the afternoon, however, Lieutenant Mellis-Smith was ordered to go forward and join Lieutenant Tirebuck with the Right Wing. He reached the nullah in safety, but while crossing open ground to visit a piquet by the

river he was shot in the head by a sniper and killed instantly. Lieutenant Mellis-Smith had served with the 1st Battalion in France and Gallipoli, and had come through unscathed. He had been with the 2nd Battalion only a few months, but he had become a great favourite with officers and men, and his death was deeply felt.

The casualties in Gurkha other ranks during the afternoon numbered fifty-five, mostly of "A" Company.

On the left the 13th Division had advanced practically unopposed and had succeeded in closing the Dahra Bend completely. The Turkish forces in front were thus shut in with their backs to the river.

Towards evening Captain Lentaigne went up and took over from Lieutenant Tirebuck. Later the rest of the Battalion moved up, and the whole Battalion, assisted by Sappers and Miners and the 128th Pioneers, adapted the nullah to give protection from artillery fire, and generally consolidated the position.

The next day, the 12th February, the Battalion remained in this position, from which, during the afternoon, it was privileged to watch a remarkable attack by the 102nd Grenadiers and a company of the 37th Dogras against a Turkish advanced redoubt about five hundred yards from the left flank of the Battalion's position. Owing to a misunderstanding the attack was unsupported by artillery. When the first company of the 102nd assaulted it was met with a hail of rifle and machine-gun fire. It lost all its British and Indian officers and 99 of its 136

other ranks, but five men managed to reach the objective and hold on. Then the rest assaulted, and the redoubt was eventually captured and held against several Turkish counter-attacks, the Grenadiers suffering a total of nearly 300 casualties and the Dogras 109. It was a most gallant episode, and one of which all ranks of the 35th Brigade were justifiably proud.

The enemy now withdrew from the captured redoubt, and after dark "A" Company of the Battalion was sent out to ascertain the extent of this withdrawal opposite the Battalion's front. After advancing five hundred yards opposition was encountered, and a strong patrol under Jemadar Chabbu Thapa went forward and engaged the enemy with bombs. Having ascertained the enemy's exact position, Jemadar Chabbu evacuated his casualties, about twelve, and then, in difficult conditions, withdrew his men with consummate skill. He himself was the last to withdraw.

For his gallantry on this and other occasions Jemadar Chabbu received the I.D.S.M. (immediate award).

The 13th and 14th February passed quietly enough, apart from heavy sniping. There were various fatigues for improving the position, but all ranks found time for a smoke, a chat, and a general clean up. One or two comfortable dug-outs were appropriated, bedding was sent up, and, for a wonder, the weather kept dry.

At mid-day on the 14th the Battalion's front trenches were conspicuously lined with fixed swords, while the artillery carried out a bombardment of

the enemy trenches opposite. This was done in order to divert the attention of the Turks from the 13th Division, which was to initiate the final attack in the Dahra Bend the next day, and the demonstration was subsequently proved to have had the desired effect.

Soon after 8 A.M. on the 15th February the 13th Division commenced its attack. It met with considerable success, and by mid-day was in possession of the whole of the western half of the Turkish line across the Dahra Bend.

In the afternoon the 35th Brigade, holding a line on the right, joined in the attack, the Buffs and Dogras assaulting with great dash, supported by the Battalion and the 102nd Grenadiers, and capturing some hundreds of enemy prisoners. By 4 P.M. the whole of the Dahra Bend was in British hands except for a portion in the north-west corner, where the Turks were still holding out on a front of about one and a half miles. An attack on this last position by the 13th Division and 35th Brigade was timed for 6.30 P.M., but, owing to a heavy rainstorm which turned the ground into a quagmire, it was postponed till 3 A.M. next morning. It was eventually rendered unnecessary by a brilliant piece of night work by "C" and "D" Companies of the Battalion under Major Scott.

Major Scott was told that the remaining Turks were to be seen collecting pontoons and might attempt to cross the river that night. He was therefore to keep in touch with them, but if he encountered opposition he was to wait for the main attack at 3 A.M. before advancing. He decided to

advance towards the Turkish positions, pausing every four hundred yards to establish a piquet, and he sent an advanced guard forward under Lieutenant Harrison.

The story can best be continued, perhaps, in the picturesque words of Lieutenant Harrison himself :—

" Scott put out his first piquet, No. 9 Platoon, and we had advanced some two hundred yards when we ran into some Turkish voices. We lay down and gave 'em a round or two rapid and then charged. They bolted like stink to three pontoons, which they pushed off just before we reached them. We all hurled bombs as fast as we knew, and the Lewis-guns got under way on the bank behind. An orderly stood behind Scott and me saying, ' Sahib, lo bomb ! ' and we ' lo'ed,' with the Lewis-gun bullets whistling about half an inch past Scott's ear and our own bombs bursting all around us ! The near two pontoons got about half a dozen bombs plumb into each of them, as they were only a dozen feet off when we arrived on the scene. They retired down-stream, uncontrolled and full of groans and screams. The Lewis-gun bullets skimmed along the water and then got fairly into the third pontoon, which stuck on a sand-bank about half-way across, whereupon we ceased fire and heard more groans ! We then got under way again, and had a heavy but extraordinarily ineffective fire directed at us from about two hundred yards distance. Mahabir was sent to get round the rear of this batch in case they bhagoed, and then we had another charge, the men making a most unearthly shindy which was enough to put the wind up anyone. The idea of being spiked encouraged the Kamarad stunt again. . . .

" Scott came up and was fired on at point-blank range by a damned Arab. He looked round for a weapon, being absolutely by himself and unarmed, picked up a Turkish pick, gave it a hammer swing, and deposited about three inches of it into the brute's brain. Then we got all the men out, including a half-drunk brigadier, who suddenly

shoved a what-the-devil's-up-now face out of his dug-out, Scott's appearance making him Kamarad and pretty *jaldi* too. There were about fifty in this batch. Weallens, who'd been told to follow up posting piquets, rolled up at this minute cursing life in general and Chamu in particular. Then we heard whistling; we whistled back and they answered, so Weallens went out with a party and came across another fifty Turks walking along without their rifles and Kamarading for all they were worth. Weallens went back with a guard to take our bag to Divisional Headquarters."

Unfortunately the news of this success failed to get through to the 13th Division's Headquarters, for, owing to heavy rain, the field telephones had ceased to work. Punctually at 2.30 A.M., therefore, the British guns opened their bombardment preparatory to the attack scheduled for 3 A.M. Shells fell thick and fast round Scott and Harrison and the piquets of "C" and "D" Companies, but fortunately only one man was hit.

"A" and "B" Companies, under Captain Lentaigne, also came in for their share of the British bombardment, for at this moment they were groping a wet and uncertain way along the edge of the river in search of the remainder of the Battalion. They, too, escaped casualties.

Fortunately for all, Havildar Karna Sing, whose conduct through the night had been most gallant, managed to get news through to the 13th Division in time to stop the assault at 3 A.M. The Battalion suffered little more than an extremely damp and uncomfortable finish to the night.

By this action the Dahra Bend was completely cleared of the enemy, the Battalion having taken

no less than 362 Turkish prisoners. For its good work on this occasion the Battalion received the congratulations of the Divisional Commander, and the following immediate awards were made :—

	Major H. St G. Scott, D.S.O.,	Bar to D.S.O.
	2nd Lieut. A. M. L. Harrison,	M.C.
No. 2537	Havildar Karna Sing Gurung,	I.D.S.M.

The next four days were wet but pleasantly quiet. Sniping was fairly bad from across the river, but for once the Battalion had the chance to indulge in a little counter-sniping. Piquet posts were established or improved along the river-bank—that of Havildar Karna Sing being a model of its kind. The battlefield, too, had to be cleared up. The Battalion accumulated a marvellous collection of bombs, rifles, and bayonets (few of which, sad to say, could be kept as trophies), while the doctor and stretcher-bearers were kept busy with the Turkish wounded. The mud was bad everywhere, but the only people who were really unhappy were those at Battalion Headquarters, which, being situated where the water could not drain off into the river, were nearly flooded out.

On the night 19th-20th February the Battalion was relieved by the 40th Brigade and moved back to rest under canvas at Kala Haji Fahan on the Hai River.

British operations in the Dahra Bend had now been completely successful, and the Turks, after a very gallant defence in the most disheartening circumstances, had been driven from all their positions south of the Tigris. North of the Tigris, however,

and some twenty miles down-stream, the Turkish strong position at Sannaiyat was still holding out. It was decided to carry the Sannaiyat position by a frontal attack. At the same time it was hoped to cut off the enemy's line of retreat to Baghdad by forcing a crossing of the Tigris at Shumran, just west of the Dahra Bend, and getting astride the Baghdad road, which ran through Kut and then passed about four miles north of the Shumran Peninsular.

The first part of this plan was successful. On the 22nd February the 7th Division made a brilliant attack at Sannaiyat, and, at cost of heavy casualties, carried the first two lines of the Turkish defences.

On the 23rd February the 37th Brigade (14th Division) forced a crossing of the Tigris at Shumran and established a boat bridge about three hundred yards long to the Shumran Peninsular. This was a splendid piece of work considering the opposition encountered and the swollen state of the river, and it was not accomplished without considerable losses. The Norfolks, the Hampshires, and the 2nd and 9th Gurkhas were the troops chiefly concerned. Lieutenant Allington, a reserve officer who had served with the Battalion in 1915, was in charge of one of the first parties of the 9th Gurkhas to cross ; he was killed.

The Battalion was still in camp at Kala Haji Fahan. It moved out during the afternoon of the 23rd, crossed over the newly made Shumran boat bridge at 8 P.M., and dug in about a thousand yards from the left bank of the river.

By the early hours of the 24th the Turkish army

was in full retreat from Sannaiyat, and at about 6 A.M. the Battalion had a good view of the 36th and 37th Brigades in action against the very plucky Turkish rear-guard. A little later the Battalion was fully occupied with its own affairs.

The task of the 14th Division was to clear the Shumran Peninsular of the enemy in order to give the cavalry division a jumping-off place from which to penetrate to the Baghdad road and cut off the line of the Turkish retreat. The 36th and 37th Brigades attacked at dawn, and by 8 A.M. had cleared the Peninsular up to the Dahra Ridge, with the exception of a sector some 1500 yards in width between the left of the 37th Brigade and the river. At about 8.30 A.M. the 35th Brigade received orders to clear this sector.

The Battalion at once advanced, with the Buffs on its left. "A," "B," and "C" Companies were leading under Captain Lentaigne, Lieutenant Tirebuck, and Lieutenant Weallens respectively, while "D" Company advanced in reserve under Lieutenant Harrison, the whole in lines of platoons. After about a mile and a half both the Battalion and the Buffs came under heavy fire from machine-guns concealed in the many dry canals with which the area was intersected. The Battalion advanced some four hundred yards under this fire and the leading companies manned a deep nullah, while "D" Company halted fifty yards in rear. Here a pause was ordered preparatory to a promised artillery bombardment. Unfortunately the height of the river "bund" deprived the gunners of all observation, and the support was not forthcoming.

Both battalions then resumed the advance unsupported. The Battalion's leading companies, commanded by Captain Lentaigne, went forward under a hail of bullets, both direct and enfilade, and reached a ridge some four hundred yards in front of the nullah, while the reserve company occupied the nullah itself. The Buffs were held up almost immediately by heavy fire from a village on the left flank, and could make no further progress during the day.

The position of the Battalion's leading companies was now far from enviable. About two hundred yards in front of the ridge which they held ran a nullah. This was full of Turkish machine-guns. Down the left flank of our position ran a ridge which joined the Turkish nullah and the village which was holding up the Buffs, the village being behind the Battalion and to its left. Both the ridge and the village itself were strongly held by the Turks. The Battalion's companies were thus open to fire from front, left flank, and left rear. They dug themselves in as quickly as possible, but suffered a large number of casualties.

Throughout the day it was only with the greatest difficulty that the Battalion's leading companies managed to maintain their position, and their casualties continued to mount up. Any movement on the ridge, or over the ground intervening between the ridge and Battalion Headquarters in the deep nullah, drew a murderous fire. The men, however, returned the enemy's fire with magnificent spirit, and the day was notable for many acts of gallantry.

Captain Lentaigne was tireless in his efforts to

inspire the men, and was continually moving up and down the ridge in spite of the heavy fire.

Lieutenant Dabholkar, the Medical Officer, was hit while attending to the wounded in the open. The bullet struck near the base of his spine. In spite of the pain and weakness from which he suffered he insisted on carrying on, and worked steadily through the afternoon and the whole of the following night, attending to all casualties.

About 1 P.M. an enemy machine-gun opened an enfilade fire along the ridge, and the position became precarious. A Lewis-gun team of "C" Company at once moved across an exposed stretch of ground and engaged the enemy gun. All the men of the team excepting two, Riflemen Ude Pun and Gamir Sing Thapa, were hit; but these two, undeterred by the accurate fire, brought their gun into action and successfully silenced the enemy's machine-gun.

The men of the reserve company, too, did splendid work in carrying up ammunition to the ridge, several of them being hit. One volunteer, Rifleman Asamaru Newar, did no less than three trips, carrying a full box on his head each time. He miraculously escaped injury.

Elsewhere the rest of the 14th Division was successfully carrying out its difficult task, and by 1.30 P.M. a way had been cleared by which the Cavalry Division could move out towards the Baghdad road. The Cavalry Division then advanced north for about three miles and came in contact with the Turkish rear-guard. Unfortunately it found itself held up by this rear-guard, and as a

result the main Turkish army was allowed to continue its withdrawal unmolested.

As soon as it became dark the evacuation of the Battalion's wounded was commenced. During the afternoon a few had managed to crawl back to the nullah, but, since every attempt to move drew fire, most had lain where they had fallen. Now they were brought in, and the nullah became a miniature surgery.

"D" Company was sent forward to the ridge, and had orders to investigate any withdrawal of the enemy in front. Later, therefore, when the enemy's sniping lessened, a strong patrol was sent out under Jemadar Siriparsad; this returned about 11.30 P.M. to report the enemy's position deserted. The position was at once occupied by "D" Company. A further patrol under Havildar Gobindu returned at 2 A.M. to report that there was no enemy for at least a mile in front.

Dawn of the 25th found the Turkish army still intact, but in precipitate retreat towards Baghdad, a hundred miles away. The British 7th Division had occupied the Sannaiyat position on the previous day, and Kut was in British hands.

So ended the battle of Kut al Amara. It will always be remembered by those who took part in the final phase for the magnificent way in which the Turkish rear-guard covered the retirement of its main army. The British and Indian troops had found a foe worthy of their steel.

One story, related by an officer of the Battalion, is worth preserving in order to show the spirit of cheery courage in which the men of the Battalion

faced the perils of the last day's fighting. When a certain Lewis-gun team came into action No. 1 was at once shot through the head. No. 2 took his place—only to get one in the shoulder. No. 3 then took over the gun, while those around ceased firing and gazed at him with deep solemnity. A moment later there was a bang, and No. 3 went the way of his predecessors. A roar of laughter rose from the interested spectators—who had hastily made a book on his chances !

The following immediate awards were made for gallantry and devotion to duty on the 24th February :—

	Lieut. Dabholkar, I.M.S.,	M.C.
No. 3850	Rifleman Ude Pun,	I.D.S.M.
No. 3386	Rifleman Gamir Sing Thapa,	I.D.S.M.

The valuable services of Captain Lentaigne and Naik Puranbahadur of " C " Company, whose disregard for personal danger and coolness under fire on this and other occasions proved a constant source of inspiration to those serving with them, were recognised in a later despatch, Captain Lentaigne being awarded the D.S.O. and the French Legion of Honour, and Naik Puranbahadur the I.D.S.M. Rifleman Asamaru Newar was also rewarded for his gallantry by the Italian Bronze Medal for Military Valour.

During the fighting between the 22nd and 24th February the casualties of the 14th Division amounted to 1100, of which the Battalion's share was 142. The Battalion's casualties were as follows :—

Killed.—Jemadar Gamir Sing Gurung, Jemadar Motilal Thapa, and 27 Gurkha other ranks.

Wounded.—Captain Rogers, Lieutenant Weallens, Lieutenant Dabholkar, I.M.S., and 110 Gurkha other ranks (several of whom died later).

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Captain Rogers, the Adjutant, received a severe wound in the head, from the effects of which he afterwards died. The son of Lieutenant-Colonel G. W. Rogers, D.S.O., an old officer of the Regiment who had commanded a Battalion of the 1st Gurkhas, he was a gallant and popular officer, and his death was a sad loss to the Regiment. Lieutenant Nye took over the duties of Adjutant.

For the Battalion's share in the operations of January and February 1917 the Regiment received the Battle Honour " Kut al Amara, 1917."

Mesopotamia, 1916-18, Part I. Baghdad, 1917

The battle for Kut was over and the Turkish army in swift retreat towards Baghdad, but there were strong hopes still that the Turkish rear-guard might be destroyed and the main force attacked. On the 25th, therefore, the Cavalry Division, the 13th Division, and the Naval Flotilla of five gunboats were launched in pursuit.

The Cavalry Division failed to intercept the enemy's main force, however, and the 13th Division, though it made contact with the enemy's rear-guard, was held up by the most gallant opposition. The Naval Flotilla was much more successful, for, braving the artillery and machine-guns of the rear-guard, it swept up the river and, on the 26th, attacked the main body. It captured several ships, caused tremendous damage, and turned what had begun as an orderly retreat into a panic-stricken rout. Thereafter the Turks were to make no organised stand

until, more than a week later, they were to turn at bay just south of Baghdad.

On the 26th the pursuit was continued by the 14th Division, with the 35th Brigade as advanced guard, and the Cavalry Division. The 35th Brigade moved at 4 A.M., and in its keenness to get behind the enemy covered twenty-five miles during the day at a fast pace. Even so, it failed to get within effective distance of the Turkish rear-guard, and at nightfall bivouacked four miles south-east of the enemy's position. On the 27th the pursuit was continued, the 14th Division bivouacking at night three miles north-west of the Nahr al Kalek bend.

The road, such as it was, lay along the bank of the Tigris. To the left, sometimes within a few hundred yards, ran the waters of the great river, now swollen and rapid with the first floods of early spring; to the right stretched the seemingly endless Mesopotamian desert, salt encrusted and almost featureless. In front the columns of marching men raised clouds of dust, which, borne on the strong north-westerly wind, swept back to choke and blind those who came behind.

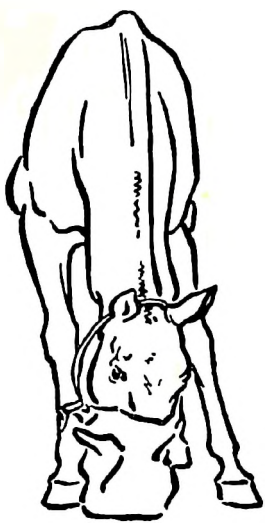
The marching was gruelling work, but, in spite of the trench warfare of the last few months, the men stood up to it splendidly. They could invariably raise a cheery shout of laughter when some unfortunate officer or man, marching for a moment with head down and eyes closed against the dust, tumbled headlong into a nullah or hole.

The route was strewn with the debris of the demoralised Turkish army. Dead and wounded; men, guns, ammunition waggons, and stores lay

about in every direction. It was obvious that the rout of the enemy was greater than had at first been realised. The Arabs, playing their usual part, hovered around and plundered and mutilated the dead and wounded. When caught in the act by British troops they received little mercy.

By the evening of the 27th February the general advance was brought to a halt, owing to the temporary failure of the supply arrangements. The Battalion reached its camp near the river about tea-time and settled down, somewhat hungrily perhaps, to a restful thirty-six hours. The chief amusements were fishing in the river, not a very successful sport, and chasing black partridge, which abounded in the brushwood around the camp. A partridge would rise whirring into the air, and the whole Battalion, with a wild "harooch," would rush madly after it. A Gurkha officer actually managed to catch one with his hands, while Major Scott and Captain Lentaigne, shooting with the C.O., raised a total of ten brace.

The 1st March found the Battalion hungrier than ever. No rations had arrived, and there were no orders to break into the emergency rations. There were orders, however, to march at 10 A.M., and by the evening the Battalion found itself in camp three miles south of Azizeyeh, having marched eighteen miles on empty stomachs. The men were very done up, but marched splendidly. Fortunately some captured rations were available at the end of the march, and the Battalion "feasted" on rice, dates, rather poor quality chupatties, and mutton. The mutton, of course, was by far the most welcome,



and the story of its acquisition deserves a few lines to itself.

About dinner-time Lieutenant Harrison took out a party of twenty men to draw the Battalion's allowance of sheep. He was the last to arrive from the 14th Division, and was informed by a regretful Staff Captain that, though the Battalion should have received twenty sheep, there were in fact none available, the remainder having been earmarked for the 13th Division. Lieutenant Harrison said it was very sad, dropped a hint to his N.C.O., and proceeded to engage the Staff Captain in deep conversation. Very soon, under cover of several convenient nullahs, no less than twenty-five prime sheep had been stealthily conveyed to the Battalion's lines. Unfortunately the Staff Captain, still full of regrets, insisted on accompanying Harrison back to the Battalion lines in order to make his apologies to the C.O. As the two approached the lines a mighty bleating was heard—the bleating of twenty-five sheep. With great presence of mind Harrison turned to his runner, and, jerking his thumb in the direction of the noise, made the cryptic remark, "Dusehra, jaldi." The runner was a man of intelligence, and within a few minutes of his departure the kukri had done its work, and all was innocent quiet.

On the next day, the 2nd March, the Battalion marched six miles to a camp north of Azizeyeh, where it remained until the 5th. The whole of the IIIrd Corps (13th and 14th Divisions) and the Cavalry Division were halted in the vicinity, while the Administrative Staff and Services made great

efforts, fortunately successful ones, to cope with the ration situation.

During this break in operations General Maude himself visited the Corps to present the ribbons of the decorations awarded in the recent fighting. Several officers and men of the Battalion attended the parade to receive their decorations.

On the 5th March the three Divisions got under way again, and by the evening of the 6th, after two days of hard marching through blinding dust-storms and over ground much broken by deep nullahs and water-cuts, the Battalion found itself at Bustan, thirteen miles south of the Diyala River.

The Diyala River flows into the Tigris at Diyala village, about twelve miles by road below Baghdad. Its general direction is north and south, while the general direction of the Tigris here may be said to be north-west. The Turkish army (the XVIIIth Corps) had now reformed after its flight. The greater part was holding the right bank of the Diyala River for about ten miles, or was in reserve behind it, while the remainder was feverishly digging itself in on the Umm at Tubul position on the right bank of the Tigris about four miles south of Baghdad. The Turks were evidently not prepared to surrender Baghdad without a struggle.

The first concern was an attack on the Diyala position. The 13th Division, supported by the Cavalry Division, was to force a crossing of the Diyala River, while the 35th Brigade (14th Division) was to cross the Tigris, advance north up its right bank, and turn the Diyala position from the flank.

On the 7th March the 35th Brigade, together with

the rest of the 14th Division, advanced through Ctesiphon about six miles to Bawi, a little Arab village on the river. The Ctesiphon arch, lonely and magnificent in the desert, must have drawn the thoughts of many as they passed. The Battalion was the first of the Brigade to cross the river, for it had orders to prepare a big nullah on the right bank for the passage of the artillery and animals accompanying the Brigade. It was ferried across comfortably in a big river steamer, the officers enjoying an excellent tea *en route*. The only mishap was the loss of one mule, which fell into the hold of a barge and had to be left behind. Unfortunately the current was very swift, and when the Battalion disembarked at dusk it found itself three miles below its starting-point.

The Battalion marched north as fast as it could, got down to work, ably assisted by a section of sappers, and by 11 P.M. had ramped the nullah by means of piled brushwood and earth. Here the Battalion was joined by the remainder of the Brigade during the night, and the Brigade pushed on slowly northward over heavy, difficult country. Transport was short, for no battalion but our own had got any of its mules across the river. All the artillery, except a section of 18-pounders, and most of the machine-guns had had to be left behind too; their absence was to be felt very much in the coming fighting.

Shortly after mid-day on the 8th March the Brigade arrived at Shaikh Aswad, across the river from Diyala village and about two miles up-stream, and halted. The Battalion bivouacked in an orchard

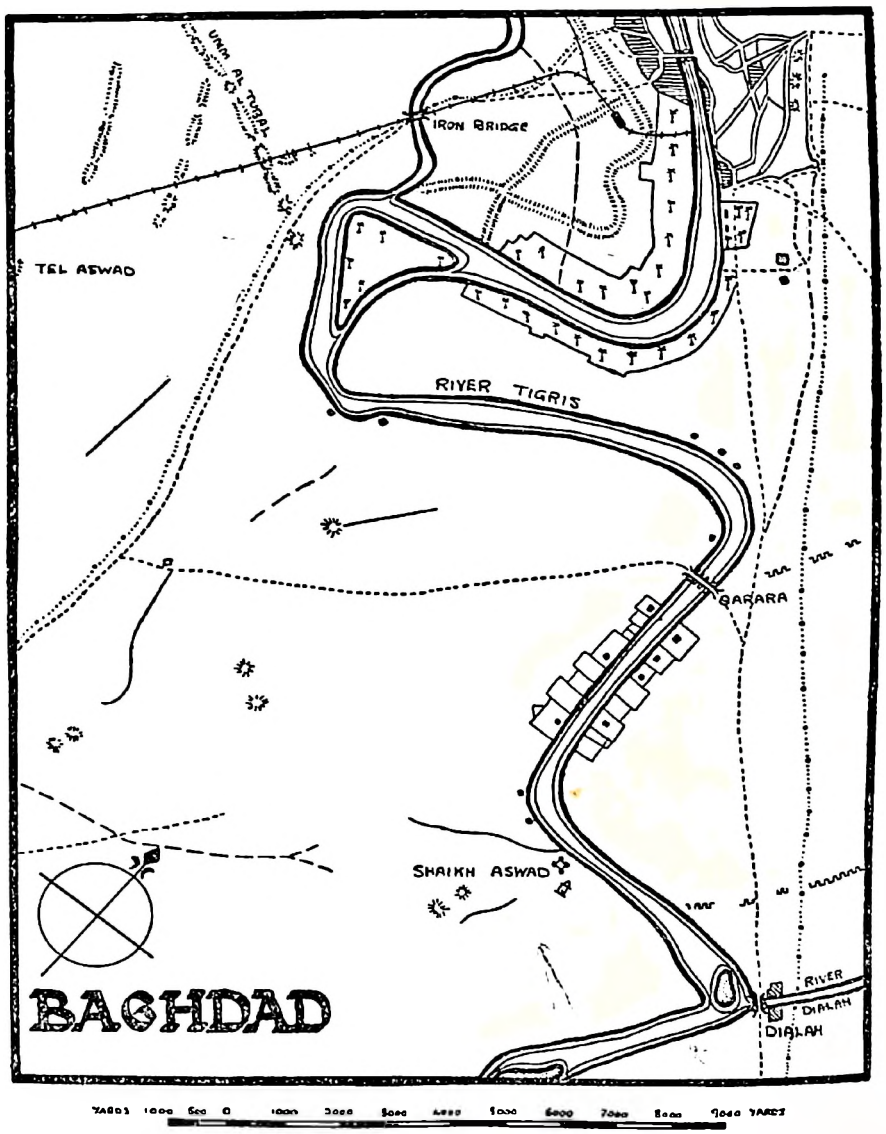
of ripe fruit. "Acres of palms, apples, almonds, vines, and every sort of fruit," wrote Captain Bell-Kingsley to a brother officer a few days later.

"An old serai held about twenty Arabs, who welcomed us heartily and at once produced eggs, chickens and milk, and there were acres of onions for the men. I think our advance was a complete surprise, as the General and I saw a Turk at the water's edge on the other bank, slowly pulling a boat up the bank. He then stood up and hailed the Arabs in the serai. We got a couple of men to shoot at him, but they missed him and he bolted over the bund. Three shots at once rang out, so we knew that there was a small piquet there. It was a cursed nuisance. Kept up an accurate fire the whole afternoon and prevented us watering our horses.

"We stuck up our wireless and said, 'Ere we are; wot abart it?' and getting no immediate reply we went to sleep under the trees. Not having been under a tree for ten months you can imagine our enjoyment of that snooze. The place was crawling with black partridge, which strutted about us under the fruit trees."

There was little doing on the 8th March, owing to the failure of the 13th Division to cross the Diyala River the night before.

The 13th Division spent the 8th preparing for another attempt to make the crossing that night. This second attempt was a most gallant affair. Supported by a heavy artillery bombardment, a small party of the Loyal North Lancashires reached the right bank of the Diyala, and there, quite isolated, held a position against overwhelming Turkish counter-attacks. Little could be done to help them, and they had to remain there alone until the Turkish withdrawal from the Diyala position to a position


IRON BRIDGE
TEL ASWAD
RIVER TIGRIS
BARARA
SHAIKH ASWAD
BAGHDAD
RIVER
DIALAH
DIALAH

between Quarara and Tel Muhammed on the following night (9th-10th).

The Battalion, weary but comfortable in its orchards at Shaikh Aswad, spent a restful afternoon and a peaceful night, thankfully oblivious to the sound of heavy firing from across the river. It was to have its full share of battle the next day, the 9th March.

On the 9th March there began on the right bank of the Tigris the final operations which were to culminate, two days later, in the capture of Baghdad. The Turks were still holding the Diyala position strongly, but the Turkish 52nd Division had been moved to the right bank of the Tigris and was entrenched at Umm al Tubul, four miles south-west of Baghdad, and at Tel Aswad, about three miles south of Umm at Tubul. This Division was commanded from an excellent observation post between Umm at Tubul and Baghdad, close to the well-known Iron Bridge.

During the previous day and night the British Cavalry Division and 7th Division had crossed the Tigris by a newly constructed boat bridge and had advanced north; during the morning of the 9th they made contact with the enemy in the Tel Aswad position.

At 11 A.M. the Battalion, as part of the 35th Brigade, left Shaikh Aswad, and later the Brigade received orders to come up on the right of the 7th Division and join in the attack at Tel Aswad. The Brigade reached its position at about 2 P.M. It at once came under artillery fire and deployed for attack with two battalions leading. The Buffs

were leading on the right, with the Battalion behind them, ready to come up on their right when a bend in the river should give space so to do.

The Battalion extended and advanced steadily under rifle-fire and heavy artillery fire from both sides of the Tigris. Major Perreau, commanding, and three Gurkha other ranks were killed almost immediately, while Captain Lentaigne and Lieutenant Dabholkar, M.C., I.M.S., were slightly wounded. At this time Captain Lentaigne was with Battalion Headquarters, and the two leading companies were under Major Scott and Lieutenant Harrison. The attack may best be described in Lieutenant Harrison's own words :—

" Scott was in front with Siriparsad ; then I came along, Lentaigne being with the Right Wing. We got into the bullet radius pretty quick, extended, and advanced by half companies. Scott halted in a nullah to allow the Buffs to get on, as we had to move in support of them, and I went up to him to find out our orders. Shells were coming over pretty thick by this time, and Scott had hardly started his pow-wow before Nye came up to report that poor old Perreau had been got by one of them. So he gave me some hurried orders and a ' Do you understand ? ' and hurried back to Headquarters, which left only Lentaigne and self with the companies (Tirebuck being with the Brigade), and Scott and Nye (as Adjutant) with Battalion Headquarters.

" Well, I understood one thing—and that was to get out of the blinkin' shell area, and double quick at that. So off we went. We got some nasty accurate shelling, but really remarkably few casualties. The Turks had nasty white lines on the ground, and when a line got about fifty yards away they plunked shells over and on it as hard as they could, whereupon you girded up your loins and ran like hell. We kept striking nullahs and got a breather in them. Just before we got into one of them Siriparsad went

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over with a bullet through his thigh. One of the new draft wanted to attend to him, but I said, 'Don't worry about him—he's the supporting line's job now.'

"In the nullah I ran into a party of Buffs, the subaltern in charge being as vague as regards the situation as I was. My be-all and end-all, as I explained to him, was to 'get into the blighters.' We had lost direction a bit, so moved along the nullah towards the river. Then I saw a small party of ours quite isolated—probably the Buffs—to the right about four hundred yards ahead, apparently in difficulties. There was a large body of Turks on the river 'bund' some two hundred yards from them standing up to fire. Then we saw these fix bayonets and start off for the isolated position. So up and over we went hell for leather—and the Turks at once ran back to their old position and blazed at us. After going about a hundred and fifty yards I felt the devil's own bang on the middle of my back, and turned two somersaults. Then I wondered what on earth had hit me. I soon guessed, on hearing Narbir shout out, 'Come on! The Sahib's the supporting line's job now!'

"A few more lines passed over me, and I saw Jaman Sing sprinting like a madman with a bare kukri in his hand to catch up the front line. One of his platoon fell out to look after me.

"I could see good old No. 4 Company going strong, headed by Narbir and Jaman Sing. They were heading for a village and not for the isolated post we first went for. It afterwards transpired that the lot in this village were the ones that had bowled me over—through the left shoulder and out at the right of my spine. Jaman Sing got in with the bayonet, cleared the village, and then took up a position on the far side of the village, as he was not strong enough to advance farther, also sending off a party under Karna Sing to reinforce the Buffs' party. It was a real fine bit of work, all on his own initiative, and for it, plus all his other consistent good work, he got an I.O.M. and a mention. Karna Sing also got a mention—he had always been splendidly cool and cheery whatever the situation. Narbir also did excellent work in this show, as he led on the front line without a pause after Siriparsad and I were both out of it.

"But to return to my first-aider. He proceeded to remove my belt, slit up my coat (Scott's) and shirt, and very hastily tie a first field dressing round me about six inches below the wound. I wanted him to stay, but 'No, Sahib, there's a battle on ahead,' and off he rushed as chirpy as a chicken, rolling me into a small nullah before he departed. Then I retired out of the battle for about ten minutes. . . ."

Captain Lentaigne had also been severely wounded, and at this time there were no British officers with the leading companies and only two with the Battalion, though Lieutenant Tirebuck later rejoined from Brigade Headquarters and took over command of the leading companies. As already indicated, the splendid conduct of the Gurkha officers on this occasion was worthy of the highest praise. It is interesting to note that Jemadar Jaman Sing Gurung and Havildar Narbir Thapa, who figured so prominently in this action, both subsequently became Subadar-Majors of the Battalion. Lieutenant Dabholkar again refused to be evacuated wounded until he had attended to all the casualties.

Towards evening the attack was brought to a close, and about 6 P.M. the troops received orders to consolidate. The Battalion sorted itself out, and the Brigade line was reorganised. The Battalion's casualties had been as follows :—

Killed.—Major Perreau and 11 Gurkha other ranks.

Wounded.—Captain Lentaigne, Lieutenant Harrison, Lieutenant Dabholkar, 3 Gurkha officers, and 26 Gurkha other ranks.

Three Gurkha other ranks were reported missing, believed killed.

Captain Lentaigne's second wound later proved very serious, and he had to have his leg amputated.

The British attack as a whole had not fulfilled expectations. The Cavalry Division, owing to lack of water, had been able to do little, while our troops generally had been held up and had suffered many more casualties than had the enemy. The Turks, nevertheless, must have been badly shaken, for during the night 9th-10th they abandoned the Tel Aswad line and retired to the Umm al Tubul position.

During the night the British troops experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining water. The Battalion was happily situated, being at the very bank of the river, but some units of the 7th Division had to send a long way for it. At one time during the night the Battalion's forward troops captured a wandering man with a couple of donkeys, and, since they could not understand him, sent him back to Battalion Headquarters as a Turk. After a lot of questioning it was discovered that the man was really a drabi belonging to the 7th Division who had been sent down for water and had lost his way. He was difficult to understand because he stuttered very badly. Someone waved vaguely in the general direction of the 7th Division, and the man went off quite happily into the dark. It did not take him long to lose his way again, however, and a minute later he reappeared feet first, slithering down, complete with donkeys, into the trench which constituted Battalion Headquarters. The trench was crowded and a mass of signalling wires, and the havoc which followed, before the three visitors were eventually despatched into the night, was almost incredible.

As a result of efficient patrolling during the night Brigadier-General Thomson (commanding the 35th

Brigade) obtained early information of the Turkish withdrawal, and the 35th Brigade pushed forward before dawn with the Battalion as advanced guard. By 6.30 A.M. it had reached within half a mile of the left flank of the Turkish Umm al Tubul position, where it was ordered to wait for the arrival of the 7th Division on its left before commencing a general attack. The 37th Dogras extended the right of the Brigade, coming up between the Battalion and the river.

The attack was timed for 3 P.M., but had to be postponed. A high wind rose during the morning which, later increasing to a gale, raised a blinding dust-storm in which it was impossible to discriminate between friend and foe. As a result of this storm the 7th Division did not reach its position on the left of the 35th Brigade until the evening. It was expected that the wind would die down in the evening, and plans were made for an attack after dark, but the gale continued during most of the night and the attack had again to be cancelled.

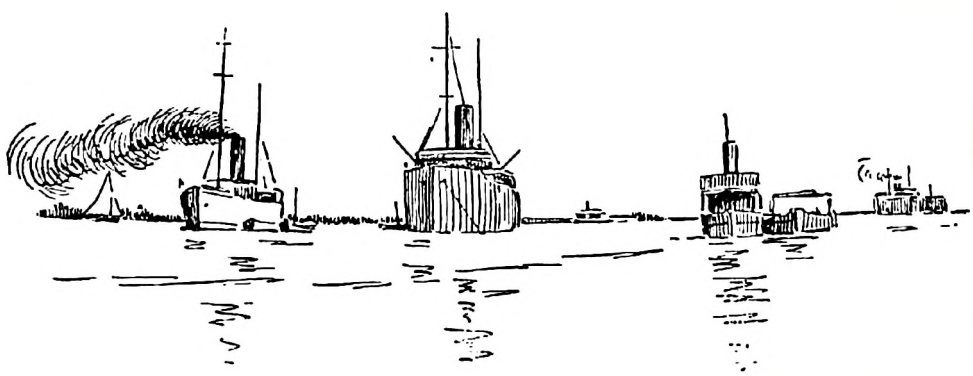
Meanwhile, the Turkish Army Commander, Halil Pasha, faced by a strong British advance on both banks of the Tigris, had reluctantly decided to abandon the defence of Baghdad, and he took advantage of the night of storm to withdraw his army from the field. British patrols sent out during the earlier part of the night met with opposition, but by 1 A.M. on the 11th a patrol sent out by the Battalion under Jemadar Jaman Sing reached the enemy's line, patrolled right and left, and was the first patrol to ascertain that the position had been vacated. On receiving this report the 35th Brigade immediately advanced, and by 2 A.M. was in occupa-

Mesopotamia, 1916-18, Part I. Baghdad, 1917

tion of the Umm al Tubul line. About the same time the 13th Division discovered that the Turks had also withdrawn from the Quarara position.

At 5.30 the same morning the 35th Brigade, acting as advanced guard to the 7th Division, moved forward towards the Iron Bridge, and at 9 A.M. on the 11th March 1917, with the Buffs leading and the Battalion second, the Brigade led the way into Baghdad. While the Buffs were ferried across the river in Arab coracles and hoisted the Union Jack at the masthead of the citadel, the Battalion remained on the right bank to prevent looting and incendiarism by the Arabs. In this connection we may perhaps quote the words of the Turks themselves: "Though this was the thirtieth time that Baghdad had fallen to a conqueror, never before had the event passed off so quietly"—a striking tribute to the discipline and orderliness of the British forces.

The Battle Honour "Baghdad, 1917," commemorates the part played by the Battalion in this decisive phase of the Mesopotamian campaign. The Regimental Holiday, which is held annually on the 11th March, is to commemorate the entry of the 2nd Battalion into Baghdad, the climax of nearly three months' arduous operations, and also the battle of Neuve Chapelle, fought in France between the 10th and the 13th March 1915, in which the 1st Battalion greatly distinguished itself.



CHAPTER XIII.

2ND BATTALION.

Mesopotamia, 1916-18, Part II. Operations North of Baghdad

THE entry into Baghdad was uneventful. As one officer wrote :—

"No City Fathers came out with Keys on a velvet cushion. We just rode in and the inhabitants gaped at us. Some of the buildings were in flames and the Arabs were looting the place wholesale, tearing out windows and dragging off everything they could lay their hands on; a few shots, however, dispersed them.

"Baghdad proved to be a city of disenchantment. The outskirts were covered with corpses and bones of dead animals, and within the mud embankment which encircled it were crowded thousands of Mahommedan graves, presenting a mournful and unkempt appearance; while, in the city itself, the miserable-looking and rather dilapidated houses of mud-brown brick and the narrow filthy streets completed the disillusion. . . . There were no sanitary nor scavenging arrangements, noxious smells abounded, and hundreds of diseased and half-starved dogs roamed everywhere."—Official History.

Nevertheless, the capture of Baghdad was of importance both strategically and psychologically. It deprived the Turks of their best base in Mesopotamia and reduced the danger of their invasion of

Persia, and it was greeted with enthusiasm throughout the British Empire and among our Allies.

The Battalion was detailed to police that part of the town situated on the right bank of the river. Few incidents occurred, as the capture of the city had had an important psychological effect on the Arab community, the leading members of which came forward, at General Maude's request, to fill places in the civil administration vacated by the Turks.

Rumour and speculation were rife. Would we continue our advance with the eventual object of reaching Mosul, or would we confine ourselves to the establishment of British rule in the vilayet of Baghdad, the northern boundary of which ran roughly from the north of Khaniqin on the Persian frontier through Tikrit on the Tigris to Ana on the Euphrates? As far as the Battalion was concerned nothing happened for the first month. Garrison and police duty came as a welcome rest after the strenuous campaigning of the past months, and drafts arrived to complete the ranks, which had been depleted by casualties. On the 11th March there were only three British officers with the Battalion: Major Scott, Lieutenant Nye, and Lieutenant Tirebuck. Lieutenant Goodall arrived soon afterwards. As Quartermaster he had been left with the Battalion's baggage. Later while the Battalion was at Baghdad two wounded officers rejoined from hospital, Lieutenant Weallens and Lieutenant Brunlees (the latter as Adjutant), and Lieutenant Walton arrived from India.

Elsewhere events were taking place which were

to change the whole military and political situation in the Middle East. On the 12th March, the day following our entry into Baghdad, the Russian Tsar had abdicated, and the curtain had been raised on the Russian Revolution. The full portent of this event was not realised for some time.

Our Russian Allies, who had undertaken to attack the eastern frontiers of Turkey along the Caucasian borders, now actually held a line extending from the shores of the Black Sea through Erzerum and across the Caucasian Isthmus to the west of Persia as far as Kermanshah. Their avowed intention was to descend on Mosul *via* Rowanduz, while their force near Kermanshah was to effect a junction with the British at Khaniqin and to advance on Kirkuk.

The British capture of Baghdad threatened the Turkish XIIIth Corps facing the Russians in Persia. The Turks therefore retired on Khaniqin with their 2nd Division, acting as rear-guard, in touch with the Russians near Kermanshah. This, roughly speaking, was the situation when the Russian Revolution broke.

Information as to what was happening in Russia was meagre and often contradictory. At the moment the army of the Grand Duke Nicholas was supposed to be standing firm on the Caucasian front, but little information could be received as to the condition of General Baratoff's force in Persia.

General Maude's first tasks were, therefore, to secure his hold on Baghdad by clearing his front and flanks, and to endeavour to form contact with the Russians in Persia. These involved operations, which included considerable fighting, in three directions—west to the Euphrates, north up the Tigris

against the Turkish XVIIIth Corps, and north-east to Khaniqin against the Turkish XIIIth Corps.

Operations on the western and northern fronts along the Tigris fell for the most part to General Cobbe's column, the Ist Corps, while those to the north-east on the Diyala front were undertaken by the IIIrd Corps, General Marshall's column, of which the Battalion was eventually to form a part.

On the 15th March, Baquba, on the Diyala, was occupied, and a column under General Keary, 3rd Division, advanced with the object of impeding the Turkish retreat and assisting the Russian pursuit. General Keary actually occupied the Jabal Hamrin on the 31st March, but owing to the lack of any form of co-operation by the Russians across the Persian border the Turks were able to extricate themselves.

On the 1st April a detachment of General Keary's force occupied Qizil Ribat unopposed. Here they were met by a "sotnia" of Russian Cossacks accompanied by Colonel Rowlandson, British Liaison Officer. Colonel Rowlandson was informed that, in view of the fact that the Turkish Corps had slipped through, General Maude intended to withdraw General Keary's column, and he hoped that the Russians would now play their part and take up the pursuit of the enemy. Colonel Rowlandson immediately flew to Baghdad, and, in a personal interview with General Maude, disabused the Commander-in-Chief of all hopes of any further efficient Russian co-operation on that front. General Baratoff's troops were disorganised, supplies were running out, and most ranks, including many officers,

wanted to get back to Russia and the Revolution. Complete rot had set in on the Persian front, and Colonel Rowlandson had no faith in reports of a reconditioned "Russian Steam-roller" under the guidance of Kerensky as Minister of War. The most that could be expected was that sufficient loyal troops would remain to maintain communications through Persia. His forecast proved only too true.

General Keary's force was accordingly ordered to withdraw to Baghdad on the 2nd April, as General Maude had decided to concentrate his forces against the Turkish XVIIIth Corps, which was holding a line astride the Tigris about Balad and along the River Adhaim. Higher up the Tigris the Turks were fortifying Istabulat, and they held a large force at Ramadi on the Euphrates. At this time the Turkish XIIIth Corps was reported to be falling back on Kifri.

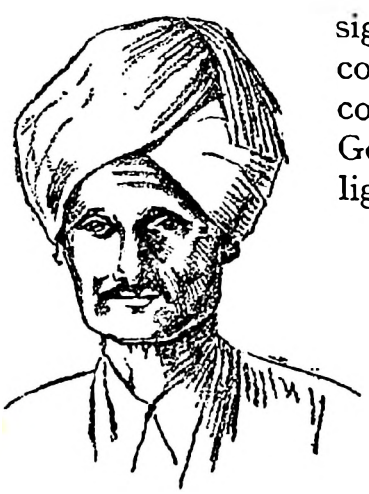
Two British columns were formed to attack the Balad-Adhaim line, one on the right bank of the Tigris and the other, under General Marshall, on the left bank. On the 6th April, General Marshall's column was at Duqma, and the following day it was reinforced by the 35th Brigade, less the 2/4th Gurkhas and 102nd Grenadiers, which, with the 36th Brigade, remained on garrison duty at Baghdad.

On the 8th April news was received that the Turkish XIIIth Corps, far from retiring to Kifri, was advancing south-west astride the Khalis Canal. General Marshall's column was accordingly ordered to attack and deal decisively with this threat prior to its attack on the Adhaim position.

The Battalion now received orders to rejoin the

35th Brigade, and it arrived at Baquba on the 9th April. On the following day it marched at 1 P.M. to link up with the Brigade, which was in position between the Tawila Canal and Sindiya, behind the Cavalry Division, the Turks having advanced during the day to a line east and west through Tijdari. The march was very trying. During the afternoon the heat was excessive and the men were still wearing their winter serge clothing. After dark to add to the discomforts the mosquitoes were terrible and much of the land was under irrigation, ankle-deep in slush. In the early afternoon the guide lost his way and took the Battalion more than six miles off the route. It was not until 10 P.M. that contact with the Brigade was made, the last part of the march being made in the pitch dark.

As soon as the Battalion arrived it was ordered to come up on the right flank of the Brigade between Muhurar and the Tawila Canal. The Brigade was stretched out on the left of the Battalion, and in the dark it was difficult to obtain touch. In fact one company was still on the move at dawn. Eventually posts were got into position continuing the Dogra line, although there was the deep and unfordable Tawila Canal between the Battalion and the rest of the Brigade.

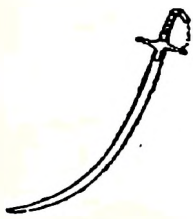


At dawn on the 11th the 6th Cavalry Brigade, moving up on the west of the Khalis Canal, had sighted a large body of Turkish infantry moving in column along the Delli Abbas-Diltawa road. A column consisting of part of the 13th Division under General Cayley had been halted at a point on the light railway to the west of the advancing Turks.

The Cavalry Brigade immediately placed itself between the Turkish column and the Khalis Canal, expecting the Turkish column to deploy to its right and so meet General Cayley's force. The Turks, however, came on rapidly, and the Cavalry Brigade was forced to retire, the Turks eventually reaching Shaikh Muhammed Ibn Ali.

General Thomson, commanding the 35th Brigade, now received orders to move up the Khalis Canal with all available infantry and artillery and to report at General Cayley's Headquarters, four miles north-east of Abu Tamar.

The Brigade advanced on a broad front with three battalions on the west bank of the Tawila Canal, and the 2/4th Gurkhas, with the 8th Field Battery, on the east bank, and still isolated from the rest of the Brigade by the canal. General Cayley's Headquarters were reached about 3 P.M., and at 4.30 the Brigade advanced against the enemy's left. The 40th Brigade of the 13th Division was held in reserve with orders to co-operate as ground was gained. The Battalion still retained its uncomfortable position on the east bank of the canal, keeping in touch with the 37th Dogras who were on the right of the line across the canal. The country was intersected with irrigation canals, and the Field Battery was soon left behind, eventually finding it necessary to move by the road running along the west bank of the Diyala towards Delli Abbas. Owing to the nature of the ground, and to the fact that the Battalion had to maintain contact with the Field Battery on its right and the 37th Dogras on its left, the Battalion became



spread out over a front of nearly three miles and found great difficulty in conforming with the orders received to concentrate nearer the rest of the Brigade. During the early stages of the advance the Brigade encountered slight opposition; a village was rushed by the leading company of the Battalion and captured with slight resistance. The Turks on the west bank of the canal, however, discovering that the 13th Division was now advancing on their right flank, withdrew, and the subsequent advance of the 35th Brigade was not opposed. That night positions were consolidated. The day had been very hot, and the men were suffering badly from sore feet, as their boots had hardened after the heavy marching over soaking ground on the previous night. There were no casualties in the Battalion, but the total British losses that day were 264. Next day over 300 Turkish corpses were found on the battlefield.

On the following day the advance was resumed unopposed. The Battalion was sent to escort the 8th Field Battery, which was still on the Delli Abbas track. On the 13th the 35th Brigade was heavily engaged at Bint al Hassan. The Battalion, however, which, together with the 8th Field Battery and 22nd Cavalry, now formed a separate detachment under Colonel Henslowe, was not engaged. The heat was increasing and all ranks were suffering considerably from lack of water, it being impossible to get water up over the flat open plain. During the 13th April nearly 100 prisoners were taken; the total British casualties numbered 191, apart from many who had succumbed to heat-stroke.

On the 14th pressure was maintained on the

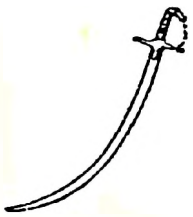
enemy, who withdrew the following night, the pursuit starting at 4 A.M. on the 15th. Henslowe's detachment was ordered to secure the crossings at Delli Abbas, and advanced to within three miles of this village, which was found by patrols to be occupied by the enemy. The detachment was about to attack when, at 4 P.M., it received orders to withdraw, as the pursuit had been broken off. It spent the night in bivouac north of Seraijik after another exhausting day.

The Battalion now joined the 37th Brigade, which was holding part of the line between Baquba and Sindiya. On the 17th it was ordered back to Es Saud, east of Diltawa, and took up an outpost line. Here a hundred men arrived back from hospital, and rest and the possibility of a much-needed wash was obtained. The Battalion had covered a hundred and six miles in ten days under the most trying conditions.

On the 22nd April the Battalion, together with the 1/2nd Gurkhas and the 8th Field Battery, marched to Duqma. Here, to the great relief of all, khaki-drill clothing, which had come up-river, was served out.

Meanwhile the 35th Brigade had been taking part in operations to the north. On the 18th the Adhaim had been forced and bridged, and on the 22nd the Brigade was co-operating at Kadisiya with an attack by the 7th Division on Istabulat. The latter attack was successful, and led to the occupation of Samarra.

On the 23rd April the Battalion marched fifteen miles to the Barura Peninsular, where it rejoined



General Marshall's column in the evening. At 7.30 P.M. orders were received for operations on the following day. The Turkish 14th Division, which was in position near Dahuba, was to be attacked at dawn by the 38th Brigade; Thomson's column, which was still at Kadisiya, was to co-operate against the Turkish right. For this operation the 102nd Grenadiers and 2/4th Gurkhas were to be in column reserve.

The men got little sleep that night, for the march started at 3 A.M. The attack commenced at 5 A.M., and by 10.30 A.M. the Turks were in full retreat. The Battalion was not engaged; that night it rejoined the 35th Brigade and occupied an outpost line.

On the 25th and 26th the column advanced unopposed to the Satha Ruins, a march of about twenty miles, the 35th Brigade acting as advanced guard. On the night 26th-27th the 35th Brigade was sent forward to occupy a position two miles south of the enemy's trenches west of Adhaim. This was occupied by 6 A.M. on the 27th. The Battalion now held a position on the right bank of the river with very precipitous and deep ravines which afforded considerable shelter. To our left front was a big detached hill known as the "Island," because in flood-time it was completely surrounded by water. On the 27th the Battalion occupied this hill without casualties, and it was from here that Jemadar Singdal sighted a small party of about ten Turks. He stalked them with a few men, and exhibited great skill in capturing the lot. As a result of reconnaissances on this day it was decided

that the best line of attack would be east of the River Adhaim. The 38th Brigade accordingly moved across the river and dug in level with the 35th Brigade during the night.

On the 28th the Battalion was relieved by the 2/9th Gurkha Rifles. This was an exciting experience, for the relief was undertaken under heavy shell-fire, and two casualties occurred. The Battalion now moved into bivouac, and the men were able to bathe. Rest was more theoretical than real, for the weather was appallingly hot and the dust and flies dreadful.

The Turkish 14th and 2nd Divisions now held a line from the high ground to the west of the river running down to a position known as "Boot Hill," about three thousand yards slightly north-west of the "Island," from whence it crossed the river eastwards to the south of the village of Adhaim, bearing north to the fortified "Mound" which constituted their left flank.

The British right rested on a bluff known as "Three Ridges," about two thousand yards due south of the "Mound," from whence it led south across the river to a point west of the "Island."

The plan of action was for the British 40th and 38th Brigades on the right to advance on the 30th and carry the east bank of the river, while the 35th Brigade moved forward and formed a strong left flank in order to counter any attack from the west bank and then eventually to gain a footing on the "Boot." The cavalry would thus be enabled to move round on the flanks and to cut the enemy's ine of retreat.

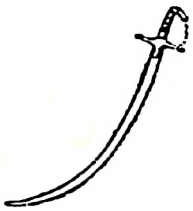
At first all went according to plan. The 40th Brigade, with the 8th Cheshires and the South Wales Borderers leading, advanced and carried the enemy front line. The Turks retired, and the Cheshires then overran the enemy's second line, capturing the village of Adhaim. Both the C.O. and the Adjutant were wounded, but since the Turks appeared to be in disorganised retreat the senior officer ordered the Cheshires to continue the advance, whereupon the South Wales Borderers pushed on after them. Both were now getting short of ammunition, and runners were sent back for fresh supplies.

Unfortunately at this moment a sudden and most appalling dust-storm rose, reducing visibility to less than fifty yards, but it did not prevent the Turks from bringing the Cheshires and South Wales Borderers under a cross-fire from the "Boot." The dust-storm increased in intensity, and visibility decreased to practically nil. Runners were lost in the blinding dust and mist; telephone communications could not be effected, and any artillery action on our part became a danger to our own troops.

The action, which had commenced at 5 A.M., had now been in progress two hours, so it was not until 7 A.M. that the situation of the Cheshires and the South Wales Borderers was realised. Reinforcements were immediately sent up, but in the meantime the Turks, better acquainted with the terrain and more used to the blinding dust, had counter-attacked. The senior officer ordered a retirement, but this was no easy task, as the rear was now being swept by machine-gun cross-fire. The retirement was, however, effected after severe hand-to-

hand fighting, and when reinforced the remnants of the Cheshires and South Wales Borderers rallied and counter-attacked in the most magnificent manner, completely routing the enemy. The Cheshires lost 137 out of 330 men, and the South Wales Borderers 206 out of 340.

In the meantime, on the west bank the 2/9th Gurkhas and 102nd Grenadiers had advanced to within six hundred yards of the Turkish front line. The 2/9th Gurkhas reached "Ancient Dam," but were unable to advance beyond it owing to heavy rifle and machine-gun fire from the "Boot." At 7 A.M. "A" and "B" Companies of the 2/4th Gurkhas were sent forward to fill the gap between the 2/9th Gurkhas and the river. Advancing under heavy fire, with Lieutenants Tirebuck and Goodall in command, they dug themselves in in the open ground. Shortly after this both officers were wounded. Although wounded, Lieutenant Goodall, with the right company, which was under heavy enfilade fire from the eastern bank, was untiring in his efforts to encourage the men. At 8 A.M. the remainder of the Battalion was sent forward to support the 2/9th Gurkhas. Suddenly everything became confused; one's nearest neighbours became blotted out by the stinging clouds of blinding dust and sand. Further advance was impossible, and for a time the artillery fired into a grey-yellow sheet. Orders were received to retire behind the "Island," but even this was impossible and could not be accomplished until dusk. For the whole day men lay with their hands and faces stinging under the sand blast, many unable to see.



From 10 A.M. the British infantry had thus remained practically stationary, while the cavalry tried to move round and cut off the enemy's retreat. In the afternoon, when the weather cleared, it was seen that the enemy was retreating into the foot-hills; he continued to hold the "Boot," however, throughout the day, withdrawing after dark. The main object, that of clearing the country round the Adhaim and preventing the two enemy forces from meeting on the Tigris, had, however, been accomplished, so the action was broken off—General Marshall had no intention of becoming involved in the hills.

The British suffered 692 casualties during this battle. The Battalion's casualties were Lieutenants Goodall and Tirebuck and 1 Gurkha officer wounded; 2 Gurkha other ranks killed and 26 wounded. For his gallantry in this action Lieutenant Goodall was awarded the M.C. (immediate award).

From the 1st to the 5th May the Battalion remained in the vicinity of Boot Hill, assisting in clearing up the battlefield. On the 6th May the column started to withdraw to summer quarters. The river-bed at this time of the year was a series of deep pools full of huge fish. Bombs were used to stun and kill the fish. On one occasion a hand-grenade accounted for two fish weighing over one hundred pounds and ninety pounds respectively—each longer than an ordinary sized rifleman. The two fish provided an excellent meal for half the Battalion.

The Battalion reached Baquba on the 14th May, and leave was granted for 2 British officers and 125 men to proceed to India.

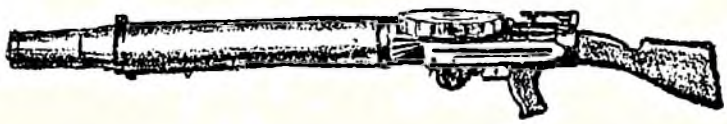
The conditions in which the Battalion had been operating since the beginning of April had been very severe. The temperature had averaged 110° Fahrenheit in the shade; there had been constant dust-storms and a great shortage of water; such water as was available was frequently brackish, and caused a tremendous amount of stomach trouble. General Maude, in his despatch, said concerning this period :—

"As conditions became more trying the spirit of the troops seemed to rise, and to the end of this period they maintained the same high standard of discipline, gallantry in action, and endurance which had been so noticeable throughout the army during the operations which led up to the fall of Baghdad."

In this despatch, in addition to the immediate awards already chronicled, Captain H. E. W. Bell-Kingsley, Brigade-Major of the 35th Brigade, was awarded the D.S.O., and several British and Gurkha officers were "mentioned."

During May, June, and July the Battalion was either at Baquba or Abu Khamed (near Diltawa), employed in improving defences. The heat was intense and there were some deaths from heat-stroke, but, thanks to the greatly improved conditions, there was very little sickness. In July the temperature rose to 122° Fahrenheit in the shade and to several degrees higher in the tents.

During these three months and the first part of August the following officers joined the Battalion :—



Major E. J. Ross, 8th Gurkhas. (Attached as 2nd in Command.)
Capt. R. Blandy.
Lieut. R. C. Ryder.
Lieut. N. Burgan.
Lieut. H. R. Modget.
2nd Lieut. A. J. Moore.
2nd Lieut. J. I. Ennis.

In August it was learnt that offensive measures were to be taken against the enemy on the Tigris and Euphrates front with a view to the occupation of Ramadi on the Euphrates. These were necessitated by indications of a Turkish offensive in the autumn to recover Baghdad. As a preliminary to these operations a force, including the 35th Brigade, under General Thomson was ordered to occupy Shahraban to cover the British right flank from the Turkish XIIIth Corps, which was still in occupation of the Jabal Hamrin range, and to be ready to re-establish communications with the Russians if and when they advanced.

With this in view the Battalion was told, on the 12th August, to hold itself in readiness to move on operation scale at twenty-four hours' notice. It was learnt on the 16th August that the Brigade was to advance and occupy the village of Shahraban, a village on the main route to Persia along the Diyala, which was still in the hands of the Turks.

In order to increase the radius of action Ford vans were to be used for the first time in the transport of troops. These proved such a success that, by the beginning of the following year, literally thousands of these little platforms on wheels were brought up from Basra.

The attack was to take place at dawn on the 19th August. "Thomson Force" was split into two columns: No. 1 was to be carried in the Ford vans and to capture the bridge-head at Misdad, west of Shahraban, while No. 2 was to march and arrive in time to support Column 1 in the capture of Shahraban.

There was great joy when it was learnt that "C" and "D" Companies had been selected to go ahead in the vans escorted by light armoured cars and a squadron of cavalry. The Right Wing of the Battalion was detailed to Column 2 and was to march to Abu Jisra; its column included the 1/5th Buffs, 37th Dogras, 102nd Grenadiers, and the 8th Battery, R.F.A.

Loading the vans was a great adventure. They were drawn up in line soon after dark. All of the hundred and one things that go to make up the requirements of a fighting force, including the men themselves, had to be placed on the little platforms behind the driver's cab; ammunition, picks, shovels, bombs, Lewis-guns, rations, and other stores were collected and arranged in their order. The van driver had the casting vote as to the weight to be carried; he probably knew by bitter experience the capacity of his tyres and springs over those roads. Many were the discussions and rearrangements before everything was stowed away and listed so as to be easily accessible.

At last everything was ready, and just before midnight the column moved off, Major Perry of the M.T. leading in a touring car. Presently all lights had to be extinguished, and then the fun

began. Major Ross had been allotted a touring car for the purpose of running up and down the column to act as liaison officer and general whipper-in. As soon as the lights were out it was obvious that Major Ross's job was greater than one man could cope with. Minor breakdowns constantly took place, and the column got out of touch. There were no roads, only a track, which, once lost, was difficult to pick up again in the dark. Eventually the column lost the track entirely, but by good fortune ran into a guide of Column 2. The unfortunate guide, a local Arab, had gone on ahead to reconnoitre when he ran into the Ford van column. He was mistaken for a hostile Arab, and a British officer put a revolver bullet into his tail. This was unfortunate, as some time previously, while working for us, the same man had been wounded and later beaten owing to a similar misunderstanding. His troubles were not ended even now, for when he got to the field dressing station he was again mistaken for a hostile Arab and made to march back to Baquba.

The following account of the action that followed is taken from a letter written by Lieutenant Weallens:—

"The intention was that the Left Wing in the vans should concentrate some distance short of Misdad (a village three miles west of Shahraban and believed to be the centre of the Turkish outposts) about 3 A.M., before light and in sufficient time for ample reconnaissance before the attack should be launched. The Turks, however, had taken the precaution of destroying the numerous culverts along the road to the south of Misdad; and digging to fill these in, or negotiating the vans through the little nullahs, so delayed our march that it was not till 5 A.M. and broad daylight

that the Brigade was concentrated. A Turkish O.P., situated in the tower of a masjid named Imam Ali Talib, just to the north of Misdad, had already discovered our presence, so the Battalion was pushed in to capture Misdad without delay.

"It is interesting to note the scanty preparation made prior to an attack of this nature in those days. Orders were often very brief and arrangements for covering fire sadly inadequate. Suffice it to say that "C" Company was detailed to work to the west of Misdad through close country, well provided with cover, while 'D' Company was directed straight at Misdad village, and was told to advance through and establish a bridge-head beyond the Mahurut Canal. This canal flows across the north of Misdad and under the main road to Shahraban. The rest of the Battalion was retained in reserve.

"'C' Company, under Nye, disappeared into the scrub and worked its way well round to the west. The walls of Misdad resembled the high mud defences of a Pathan village, and precluded attack in open formation. 'D' Company therefore sallied down the main road of the village with platoons distributed in depth at about 100 yards distance. Burgan was up with the forward platoon, and soon reported an enemy piquet manning a barricade round a bend in the main street. As an armoured car was accompanying us I suggested that its co-operation might help us in driving in the barricade, but the commander of the armoured car was so apprehensive of being trapped by artillery fire from Shahraban while shut in by the narrow walls of the village that there was nothing for it but to drive in the barricade ourselves. Burgan had been hit in the hand during his first reconnaissance, and I therefore went up to take on the leading platoon. Burgan, however, pluckily got to his feet and insisted on accompanying me. So together we led No. 13 Platoon with a 'who-whoop!' on to the barricade. This was too much for the few Turks who were still standing at bay, and they turned and bolted down the open gateway of a serai abreast of their piquet. Norman Burgan and I emptied our pistols after them as they ran, but I am afraid

to say neither of us scored a hit. He also light-heartedly flung a bomb he had with him into another doorway, but the passage inside proved empty. We boosted on up the street and soon came to the Mahurut Canal, flowing turgidly. The Turks had destroyed the quite respectable masonry bridge, and we both wondered how deep the water would be. As it was a nice hot day, however, we were quite glad to get a cooler. The water was not above four feet deep, though the current was fairly strong. The company soon followed us in, and we burst over the other side in full cry. Meanwhile the Turks in Imam Talib had been shooting us up during our approach to and passage through the village, but by now had decided to call it a day, so when we reached their position we were pleasantly surprised to find the place empty.

" There was nothing much left to do now but to advance a sufficient distance over the featureless plain, to establish the bridge-head, and to join up with ' C ' Company on our left. This we did with the company well deployed against anticipated artillery fire. About three hundred yards beyond the canal we passed some old British trenches, facing towards the enemy, and I was tempted to occupy them, but the thought flashed through my mind that the enemy might have their range, so we pushed on another two hundred yards to a small mound just off the road, which gave a slight command over the surrounding country. Here I decided to dig in astride the road about this mound. Hardly had we started digging than we saw an enemy field battery come into action just south of Shahraban and begin to pitch shells into the very trenches we had refused but five minutes earlier. We had posted a Lewis-gun on our mound, and though the range was pretty long, some three thousand yards, we let them have a magazine or two. I don't think we touched them, but, however that may be, that battery soon upsticked and chose another position under cover.

" Meanwhile our cavalry advanced over the plain and temporarily occupied a low ridge to the east of and nearly level with Shahraban, but were later chased off by some Turkish infantry. By now Battalion Headquarters and the

reserve were in Misdad, and, having made my report, I was told to stand fast. The movement of the rest of the Brigade seemed painfully slow, because it was difficult for us to realise how long it must take for it to march nearly twenty-five miles. It did not reach the scene of action until just before dusk. No further advance by our troops was made against Shahraban that day, though the indications were that the enemy were in no great strength. It is possible that our advance was delayed for want of artillery support. Certainly our Left Wing had to to do without either artillery or machine-guns in their attack at dawn. As it was, the enemy evacuated Shahraban during the night, and our force entered the town the next day.

" So ended the affair of Misdad, and the 2nd Battalion's first march to battle by M.T."

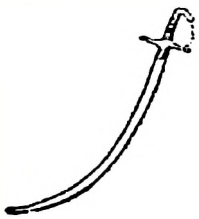
The Battalion now went into reserve at a place called Bellur Gardens, west of the Mahurut Canal, and piquets were posted along the canal to control the Arabs. Here the larder was replenished with black partridges.

Later a new site was selected nearer the canal and called Reserve Camp, and here the Battalion remained until the 6th September. Black partridge, hare and sand-grouse were plentiful, and several good shoots were organised both by the Battalion and the Dogras. On the 6th September the Battalion marched to the Buffs' camp and relieved them on outpost duty.

On the 9th September Major Ross left the Battalion on transfer to the staff of the 14th Division. On the 20th September Major Maxwell rejoined the Battalion and took over from Major Scott, who had been commanding since the 9th March. On the 9th November Captain A. M. Arnott joined the Battalion.

On the Shahraban front September passed peace-

Mesopotamia, 1916-18, Part II. Operations North of Baghdad



fully, but elsewhere two important actions had taken place. The 15th Division had attacked and captured Ramadi on the Euphrates, and the 7th Cavalry Brigade had occupied Mandali, the main supply base of the Turkish XIIIth Corps, which was still holding the Jabal Hamrin Range. The weather was now becoming cooler, and General Maude decided that the time had come to occupy the Jabal Hamrin, in order to make his right flank more secure by denying to the Turks this screen for movements against his flank.

The hills rose about four miles from our front line, and during the first half of October patrols were sent out every night to reconnoitre the approaches to them across the Ruz Canal. On the 15th October the railway reached Shahraban, and all was ready for the new offensive.

The Battalion took no part in the first phase of the operations, which started on the 18th October; it was left to garrison Shahraban, the new railhead. These operations ended on the 20th October, and resulted in the occupation of a position running from Qizil Ribat through Tawila to Mujariyin at a cost of only thirty-seven casualties.

The situation remained substantially unchanged until the beginning of December. Roads were made through the Diyala gorge, and the position was consolidated. During November, however, there was fighting on the Tigris by the British Ist Corps, which resulted in the capture of Tikrit.

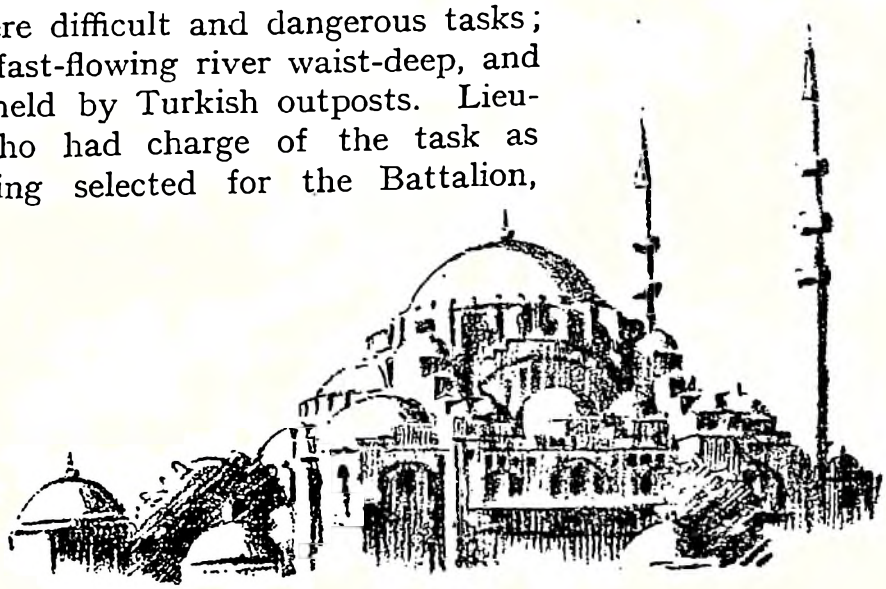
In November, too, Lieutenant-General Sir Stanley Maude, the Commander-in-Chief, died of cholera.

To those who had the honour to serve under this fine leader his loss seemed a personal grief. In the words of the Official History :—

"His great care for all that concerned their well-being, his constant sympathy with their hardships, difficulties and dangers, and his ready and generous acknowledgment of their work had endeared him to all ranks in Mesopotamia; and they all recognised how much they owed to his initiative and energy. As soldiers they also realised how greatly his military capacity had contributed to the change from failure to victory."

General Maude's place was taken by Lieutenant-General Sir W. R. Marshall, the Commander of the IIIrd Corps, the command of which was assumed by the 14th Divisional Commander, Major-General Egerton. Our own Brigade Commander, W. M. Thomson, a real friend of all his Battalions, was given command of the 14th Division, Brigadier-General C. B. L. Clery being appointed Commander of the 35th Brigade in his place.

In the latter half of November active patrolling was carried out for several nights to reconnoitre crossing places across the Diyala River between Qizil Ribat and Tawila in preparation for the second phase of the Jabal Hamrin operations, which was to drive the remnants of the Turkish XIIIth Corps from Qara Tepe and the Sakaltutan Pass. These reconnaissances were difficult and dangerous tasks; the Diyala was a fast-flowing river waist-deep, and its far bank was held by Turkish outposts. Lieutenant Burgan, who had charge of the task as regards the crossing selected for the Battalion,



was awarded the M.C. for his gallant and successful work.

The plan for these operations was to clear the Turkish forward position by an attack on the front Qizil Ribat-Sakaltutan Pass, and then to advance on Qara Tepe astride the Narin River. The 14th Division was on the right flank and the 13th Division on the left.

On the 27th November all surplus kit was dumped, and on the 1st December the 35th Brigade, which was on the left of the 14th Division, concentrated to the east of the Ruz Canal south of the Jabal Hamrin range. In order to deceive the enemy's aeroplanes all camps at Shahraban, although empty, were left standing, and all the troops spent the 2nd December hiding in the nullahs of the Jabal Hamrin.

The Brigade marched after dark on the 2nd December and crossed the hills by roads recently completed by the sappers. Lieutenant Burgan acted as guide. At 11.30 P.M. Tawila, in the vicinity of which the Battalion was to cross, was reached, and the Battalion wheeled left towards the river. The 37th Dogras and 1/5th Buffs, which were to cross the river at and beyond Sawiya, marched on. The 35th Brigade was to force a crossing of the river on a front of seven miles, while the 37th Brigade forced a crossing north of Qizil Ribat.

While it was still dark the fording of the river began. "B" Company was sent forward to establish itself by daylight on the right bank. The current was swift and many men were swept off their feet, but with arms linked the men forced their way over, and the crossing was successfully accom-

plished. No men were drowned and there was no opposition. The leading company of the Dogras also got across, but the Buffs north of Sawiya were opposed and did not get over until daylight, when the Turks, threatened by the 37th Brigade, which had crossed the river north of Qizil Ribat, withdrew.

At dawn on the 3rd the rest of the Battalion struggled across the difficult ford, but very little progress was made forward of the right bank. The fords to the north were even more difficult than the Battalion's, and the whole force was not across until dusk. Progress was slow even after the river had been crossed, because the Turks had flooded the ground. The day ended with the 12th Cavalry at Kishuk, the 37th Brigade at Tel Baradan, the 35th Brigade near Tel Ahmadia, and the 13th Division (advancing from Suhaniya) opposed at the Sakaltutan Pass. Most of the guns with the 14th Division were immobilised by the boggy ground.

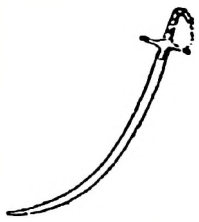
Next morning the advance was continued by the 35th Brigade, accompanied by the 13th Brigade R.F.A., and the 40th Brigade of the 13th Division. The 35th Brigade was again much delayed by floods and water-cuts, and it was not until 6.30 P.M. that it halted five miles east of the 40th Brigade, which had reached Narin Kopri. The 12th Cavalry had located the Turks in position north-east of Qara Tepe, and that evening orders were received for an attack on the hills astride the road leading from Qara Tepe to Kifri. The 35th Brigade was to attack from the south-east and the 40th Brigade from the south-west, while the 12th Cavalry was to threaten the Turkish line of retreat to Kifri from the east.

The two Brigades advanced at 6 A.M. on the 5th, the Dogras acting as advanced guard to the 35th Brigade. At about 8.30 A.M. the Dogras came under shell-fire and deployed to attack. They were approaching the foothills when, at 11 A.M., the Battalion was ordered forward on their right flank. "C" and "D" Companies, commanded respectively by Lieutenants Nye and Burgan, were in front and soon came under heavy and accurate machine-gun fire. The ground over which the Brigade was advancing was very deceptive, and there were no maps available. From a distance there seemed to be a long rather stony rise leading straight up to where the Turks had their trenches. Actually, as was soon discovered, there was a very broad nullah two hundred feet deep between the Battalion and the Turkish position six hundred yards away—two distinct hills, in fact—and it was when the Battalion reached the top of the first hill that it came under heavy machine-gun fire. The Turks had evidently ranged beforehand, and their bullets were just skimming the top of the ridge. The advance of the Brigade was now stopped by order until the artillery had been able to get on to the Turkish trenches and reduce their fire. During this pause the Buffs came up on our right flank, and "C" and "D" Companies made their dispositions to cover the Buffs' advance, both Lewis-gun sections moving under heavy fire to positions from which they could engage the enemy's machine-guns more effectively.

In the meantime the 40th Brigade had met with little opposition, and at 12.45 P.M. had reached the

crest north-west of Qara Tepe. At about the same time a Kumaon platoon in the left Dogra company made a most gallant charge, and, followed by the rest of their company, occupied a strong-point on the right of the Turkish position, capturing or killing thirty-one Turks. Shortly afterwards the Turks commenced to retire on the whole of their front, and the advance was continued. When the leading companies got to the top of the hill on the slopes of which the Turks had their positions a fine view was obtained of the plain towards Kifri. This plain stretched for about four miles, when another line of hills crossed the road. The whole plain was thick with Turkish infantry, guns, and transport, retiring in confusion, in small bodies or individually. It was a glorious opportunity for cavalry, but the cavalry and armoured cars, which had gone off earlier in the day on the right flank of the 35th Brigade, were gallantly held off by the Turkish flank guard.

The casualties on both sides were small, the Battalion losing nine Gurkha other ranks killed and thirty-four wounded, amongst the latter being Jemadar Chattur Sing Gurung of "C" Company, a very brave officer. He was badly wounded early in the day by a shrapnel bullet in the head, which rendered him unconscious for a time; later he was seen by the supports endeavouring to go forward and join his company, and it was not until he had received a direct order from his commanding officer that he was induced to go to the Regimental Aid Post and have his wound dressed. This officer was invalided from the service as the result of his wound, and never served again.



Later the Turks recommenced shelling, but not heavily. An outpost line was then taken up, until the Battalion was relieved by the Buffs and went back into Brigade reserve, where a quiet night was spent. All were very grateful for an unexpected meat ration provided unintentionally by the cavalry, who handed over to the Battalion for safe keeping an unchecked number of sheep which they had rounded up. Needless to say, the numbers decreased very rapidly until a staff officer came round to make inquiries. It was here also that the Mess Khansamah, quite an old man, who had been with the Mess continuously since the Battalion had left Kohat, distinguished himself by coming up with his mules in the midst of shell-fire and asking an officer commanding one of the advanced companies where the Mess was to be.

Several awards were received for this fight. Lieutenant Burgan received the M.C., as mentioned above. Lieutenant Nye was awarded the M.C. for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. His cool and fearless conduct encouraged his men, thereby turning a temporary check into a successful offensive. Naik Kesbir Thapa was awarded the I.O.M.; when his company was checked by machine-gun fire he advanced under fire with a Lewis-gun, silenced the enemy fire, and so enabled the advance to continue. Three other Lewis gunners—Rifleman Hariparsad Gharti and Rifleman Parbir Rana of "C" Company, and Rifleman Narbahadur Thapa of "D" Company—were all awarded the I.D.S.M. for their good work on this day.

The object of the operations had now been

achieved; the enemy had been driven from the river and the Jabal Hamrin. It was now decided to hold a line from Khaniqin through Qizil Ribat to the Sakaltutan Pass. This, it was considered, would for the time being effectively prevent the Turks, with the small force available, from penetrating into Persia. The 35th Brigade was accordingly withdrawn to Qizil Ribat. It left Qara Tepe at 6 P.M. on the 6th December and reached Qizil Ribat, after an arduous night of heavy marching, at 7 A.M. on the 7th. Just after this march had started "C" Company had the unusual experience of having to provide a firing squad to kill two Arabs who had been condemned to death for mutilating our dead. Having carried out its unpleasant task, the squad fell in again and resumed its march.

In the meantime the Russian situation was changing with kaleidoscopic rapidity. In November the Second Revolution had taken place; Lenin and his Bolsheviks were now in power. In December pourparlers for an armistice between the Bolsheviks and Turkey were commenced and negotiations opened with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk. But there were still supposed to be large forces in Russia and the Caucasus which did not accept the Bolsheviks and their policy of peace; among these were a thousand Cossacks and infantry under General Bicharakov spread over the road between Qizil Ribat and Hamadan. These were now temporarily brought under the direction of the British Commander-in-Chief. They were a fine set of men, and the Battalion was present in December at the ceremonial parade when the Army Commander presented medals and

decorations to the officers and men of this Russian force. It had taken part in the action which had preceded Qara Tepe. The parade was most impressive, the whole force marching on to the parade ground with a very slow step, singing the Russian national anthem.

The year 1918 was spent peacefully in the neighbourhood of Shahraban and in various camps. British officers and Gurkha officers and men went off on war leave, and others returned. Lieutenant-Colonel Scott took over officiating command of the Brigade for several months. The Battalion carried out normal training, interspersed with fatigues, convoy duty, road-making, and even haymaking. "D" Company was selected to return to India in June 1918 to form the nucleus of the 2/11th Gurkha Rifles, which afterwards distinguished itself on the frontier. In 1919, during the Afghan War, this company, whilst part of the 2/11th Gurkhas, captured a whole Afghan battery. Two of the guns then captured are now at Bakloh. Captain Burgan, who took the company from Mesopotamia, was still in command, and was awarded a bar to his M.C. for his gallantry. During 1918, Major-General Thomson was appointed G.O.C. North Persia Force, Major-General T. Fraser taking over command of the 14th Division.

On the 11th September 1918 orders were received to return all equipment to the proper departments, as the Battalion was under orders to proceed to another front. At first the destination was kept secret, but eventually it was known to be the Salonica front. India had already given over half

a million men ; now another four hundred thousand were being raised in sixty-seven new infantry battalions on the Salonica front. In order to assist these new formations the Indian units in Mesopotamia were to supply contingents of tried troops, and the Battalion had been chosen as one of the contingents to help organise the new formations.

The Battalion marched out of camp on the 5th October 1918, receiving a great send-off. Major-General T. Fraser, commanding the 14th Indian Division, inspected the troops, and issued the following Special Order :—

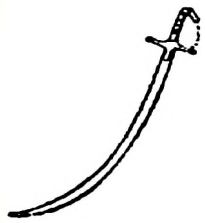
" On the departure of the 67th Punjabis and the 2/4th Gurkha Rifles I wish to place on record the high estimation in which they have been held by successive Commanders of this Division.

" Both Battalions have played a gallant part in our operations during the years 1917-18. While we all regret losing such trusty brothers in arms, all ranks in the Division unite in wishing them well on their transfer to another sphere, where we hope they will win fresh laurels."

Brigadier-General Clery issued the following Special Brigade Order on the 3rd October :—

" On the departure of the 2/4th Gurkha Rifles from the Brigade the Brigadier wishes to put on record his appreciation of the splendid work this fine regiment has invariably performed whilst with the Brigade. In action their fighting qualities have been second to none, while in camp their conduct has been all that could be desired. It is with much regret that the Brigadier, on behalf of all ranks of the Brigade, bids them ' Good-bye ' and ' The best of luck.' "

The Battalion reached Basra by train and river on the 9th October.



There were impressive changes at Basra, both on land and on the water-front, since the Battalion had disembarked in February 1916. Then transports had been roughly tied up to palm trees. Disembarkation had often to be undertaken into small boats in mid-stream, and men and stores brought ashore over planks into slushy mud. The roads traversed to billets had been just rough tracks of almost indescribable filth. Now, transports slid alongside properly constructed stone quays, and stores were unloaded by cranes into railway trucks. Everywhere temporary huts had been replaced by permanent buildings. The streets were paved and clean ; miles of embankment kept the flood-waters away from the shores and the outskirts of the town. Metal roads, the material for which had been brought from India, now ran out to the outlying camps. The whole place was lit by electricity, and water laid on to every camp and billet.

The Battalion embarked on H.M.T. *Elephanta* on the 27th October with the following officers :—

Lt.-Col. H. St G. Scott, D.S.O., Commanding.
Major H. E. W. Bell-Kingsley, D.S.O., 2nd in Command.
Capt. L. H. Brunlees.
Capt. L. G. W. Hamber.
Capt. W. Bunn, I.A.R.O.
Capt. G. M. Goodall, M.C., I.A.R.O.
Capt. E. N. Harris.
Lieut. C. T. Tirebuck.
Lieut. R. C. Ryder, I.A.R.O.
Lieut. H. L. Barstow.
Lieut. H. R. Modget, I.A.R.O.
Lieut. L. Gamble.
Lieut. A. R. Nye, M.C., I.A.R.O.
Lieut. H. E. Madge.
Capt. A. Y. Dabholkar, M.C., I.M.S.

Lieutenant L. C. J. B. Walton, who had accompanied the Battalion from India to Mesopotamia in February 1916, had been transferred to a newly raised battalion in India in January 1918, as also had Major D. W. Maxwell.

Of the British officers who had joined the Battalion after its arrival in Mesopotamia nine had left again on transfer to other units, &c., before the end of October 1918. These were the following :—

Major E. J. Ross.
Capt. A. M. Arnott.
Capt. R. Blandy.
Lieut. N. Burgan.
Lieut. L. E. Walsh.
Lieut. A. T. Davies.
2nd Lieut. A. J. Moore, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. J. I. Ennis, I.A.R.O.
Capt. P. N. Cook, R.A.M.C.

After a short stay at Muscat and Suez the transport arrived at Port Said on the 11th November. Here, at 8 A.M. on the 12th, news was received that Germany had signed the Armistice. All ships in the harbour started their syrens. Balloons and aeroplanes decorated with flags flew round dropping coloured lights and smoke bombs. Salutes were fired ; rockets, Vérey lights, and maroons went up at night. Everybody was excited and elated. All wondered if we would now proceed to Salonica or not.

Salonica

On the 15th November the transport, having taken aboard 350 men of the 10th Jats, sailed again in

Salonica

convoy with two other steamers carrying troops for Salonica. The convoy was escorted by one British and two Japanese destroyers, as it was doubtful whether the news of the Armistice had been received by all German submarines. It arrived at Salonica on the 18th November, and the Battalion disembarked the next day.

The Battalion went into a camp of bell tents at Uchantar, eight miles from the port, and remained there for six weeks. The weather was very bad ; it rained constantly, and there was usually a strong cold wind blowing. The men, after their long stay in Mesopotamia, found this very trying, and the sudden change of climate accounted for much sickness.

Salonica was an interesting place, with its cosmopolitan population, which included troops of many nations—British, French, French Colonial, Italian, Serbian, and Greek.

During its stay in Greece the Battalion was re-equipped, and was again issued with Gurkha field service hats in place of the helmets which had disfigured it during its time in Mesopotamia. It was also issued with new transport—eight G.S. limbered waggons, a Maltese cart, and eighty pack-mules. The mules were large Argentines, and the men had to stand on boxes or mount in order to groom them. During this period the Battalion had the unusual experience of having ten British sergeants on its establishment. Some of these remained with the Battalion until the middle of 1919. They included two sergeants of the Buffs who had volunteered to accompany the Battalion from Mesopotamia.

The establishment of officers was also increased by the arrival of the following :—

Salonica

2nd Lieut. R. G. Jefferson.
2nd Lieut. G. C. Buzzacott.
2nd Lieut. R. J. West.
2nd Lieut. E. J. Strange.
2nd Lieut. R. Kinnaird.

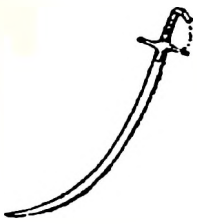
Early in December the Battalion was posted to the 81st Brigade of the 27th Division, which was shortly to proceed to the Caucasus. This Brigade consisted of the 1st Royal Scots, 2nd Cameron Highlanders, 89th Punjabis, and 2/4th Gurkhas. Later it was learnt that the Battalion's destination was to be Batum, a Russian port on the Black Sea.

The Caucasus

After the Russian debacle the Turks had invaded South Russia, and were still in occupation from Batum to Baku on the Caspian Sea. A small British force under General Dunsterville had endeavoured to frustrate this invasion. This force, which never amounted to more than a thousand men all told, held the town of Baku from the last days of July until the middle of September, when it had to retire to Enzeli in the face of over ten thousand of the enemy.

The Battalion and the 89th Punjabis sailed from Salonica on the 29th December in the P. & O. s.s. *Malwa*. The passage of the Dardanelles on the 30th and of the Bosphorus on the 31st was full of interest to the men. On the 2nd January 1919 the Battalion disembarked at Batum in beautiful weather.

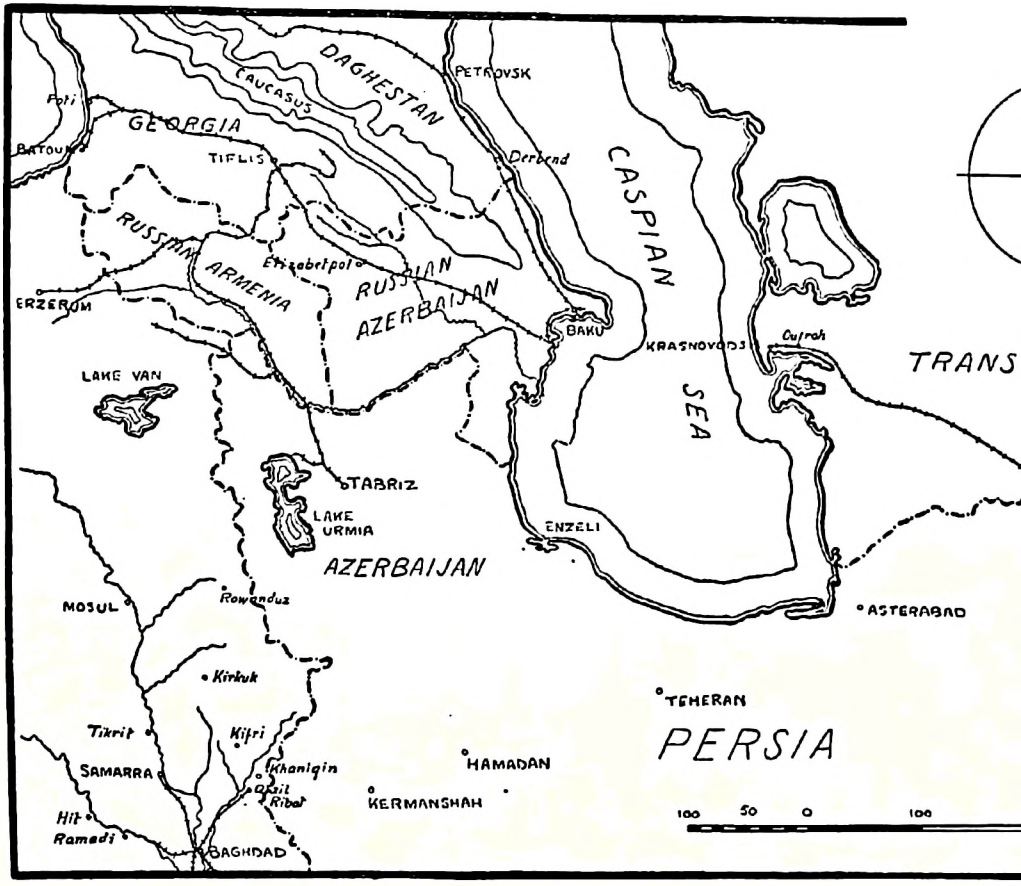
The approach to Batum and the voyage along the Black Sea littoral had been magnificent. In some



places the foothills run down to the seashore, rising gradually until the snow-capped mountains of the greater Caucasus range are seen glistening in the distance. But the town of Batum brought everybody rudely back to earth and war. It had been in occupation by the Turks for over a year. The filth was indescribable. Dead and dying animals littered the streets; the woodwork of many of the houses had been torn out for firewood; no latrines had been built—in houses where troops had been billeted special rooms had been set apart for this purpose, rooms which had no other accommodation than the floor. In one building were a number of sick transport ponies dying of starvation or injury, for the Turk will not put an animal out of its misery, but requests Allah to take it. The town was still full of Turkish troops who were being evacuated, and thousands more were arriving daily from other parts of the Caucasus. Fatigue parties were organised to clear and clean up places and buildings where the Battalion was to be billeted. It was a disgusting job. The Battalion was not, however, destined to remain in Batum. Major-General Sir W. M. Thomson, K.C.B., M.C., the old 35th Brigade Commander, who was in command of the Caspian area, had asked for it to be sent to his command.

On the 5th January the Battalion entrained for Tiflis for garrison duty, but at Tiflis orders were given not to detrain, as the Battalion was proceeding to Baku on the Caspian Sea. The journey from Batum to the Caspian Sea, which normally takes from eighteen to twenty-four hours, took seven days. It was, however, a very interesting experience.

CAUCASUS AND CASPIAN



From Batum the train travels along the seashore through country which rivals yet resembles the French Riviera in its vegetation and colour. The line then mounts into the hills, through forest, over torrential streams, and along rocky crags, until Tiflis is reached. From Tiflis it descends into the arable plains around Elizavetpol, whence the country becomes flatter and less fertile. After this the line runs through country devoid of all vegetation other than hummocks of camel grass. The sandy waste much resembles parts of Mesopotamia, and is absolutely waterless. Water for the town of Baku is carried two hundred miles by aqueduct and pipeline. As Baku was approached the oil-fields were reached, and a forest of derricks and pumps was passed.

At Baladjari, the junction fifteen miles outside Baku, it was learnt that the Battalion was to proceed to Petrovsk, a port on the western shores of the Caspian and north of Baku.

A most complicated political and military situation had developed in the Caucasus. The first duty of the occupying British forces was to evacuate the Turkish armies and the German garrison. This accomplished, internal peace and communications had to be secured. The three principal States in the Caucasus—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia—were, however, at loggerheads and periodical war. Their inhabitants were a motley crowd: Mohammedans, Christians, Tartars, and Jews; White Russians, Red Russians, and Russians of indeterminate complexion; Asiatics and Eastern Europeans—all these were to be found and more.

Azerbaijan, of which the province of Baku was a part, was predominantly Mussulman with a strong Turkish orientation. A large proportion of the population of the town of Baku was Christian Armenian, however. These people were violently anti-Tsarist Russian and had strong leanings towards Bolshevism. They looked to the British to grant them special favours as a persecuted Christian race. Since 1904 the Armenians and local Mohammedans had periodically massacred each other, a fact which precluded any chance of local co-operation between the two races.

The Georgians had been under German protection during the Turkish occupation of the Caucasus; they were now sitting on the fence, claiming all they could from the British and occasionally going to war with Armenia.

Caucasian Armenia had been overrun by Turkish troops. The country was starving and full of Armenian refugees from Turkey, where over a million of these people had either been massacred or had died of disease.

To add to the confusion, several of the smaller tribes had set up independent republics in their own territories; the most important of these was the Hill Government of Daghestan, of which Petrovsk was the largest town and port. On the confines of this collection of warring republics were various Red Armies of the Bolsheviks, fighting the counter-revolutionary forces of General Denikin and endeavouring to regain their foothold in the Caucasus. One vulnerable point was this little republic of Daghestan, through which the Bolsheviks hoped to

penetrate; another was Central Asia, where large forces were concentrated in the hopes of working their way through Tashkend and Bokhara to the port of Krasnovodsk on the Caspian Sea.

Private armies were the order of the day. Any loyal Russian officer who was able to obtain adherents and finance attacked the invading Bolsheviks. At Petrovsk General Denikin held sway; he was urging the Daghestan Republic to attack the Bolsheviks, but openly avowed his intention of eventually regaining Daghestan for Russia. He had consequently lost popularity among the Daghestanis. The British were now called upon to keep the peace, which was difficult, because we were on the one hand assisting Denikin, and on the other endeavouring to maintain the *status quo* as regards the various republics.

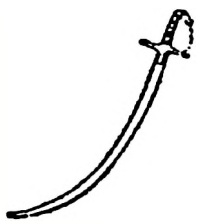
Petrovsk, where the Battalion arrived on the 14th January 1919, was a base for the British naval ships in the Caspian. The rôle of the Battalion was to protect this base and an aerodrome of a Wing of the Royal Naval Air Service at Novi Petrovsk, four miles away. There were no other British troops in the Petrovsk area. The weather was very cold, and rations were at times difficult to obtain; Captain Tirebuck, who was Quartermaster, had to buy locally practically all the rations required. There was a certain amount of sickness, influenza, pneumonia, and trench feet.

On the 26th February the Left Wing received orders to proceed immediately to Baku. It was essential for the safety of British communications that General Thomson should have command of the Caspian Sea. The Bolshevik Fleet was locked up

at Astrakhan, two hundred miles north of Petrovsk, which was icebound, but certain ships still remained at Baku. It had been decided to disarm them, and disorders were feared.

It was very noticeable that the Caucasians of all denominations held Gurkha troops in the greatest respect. Lurid tales had been published in the local Press regarding their prowess when in action against the Jangalis in Persia. It was stated that they could progress uphill on all fours at a greater speed than a horse could run on the level; they carried a large flat knife in their mouths and without faltering could fell the undergrowth, even large trees, and so cut their way through the forest. At times, it was said, they would hang head downwards from the branches of trees and slash off the heads of the enemy with this formidable knife; at other times they would throw the knife with such accuracy as to kill their man immediately, and would then rush forward and regain the knife. As they did these things they would laugh with glee; the scowl of a Cossack was nothing to the smile of a Gurkha.

After an absence of five days the Left Wing returned from Baku to Petrovsk on the 3rd March. It had had an exceptionally hard time, having been on continuous duty for thirty hours with hardly any time to cook. It had had to obtain food as and when it could, mostly borrowing from other units. The situation in Baku was so precarious that troops were wanted at almost every point. Orders were often received to march at once to a certain place, and then countermanded while on the march because



the situation had cleared there, but was expected to blow up at another part of the town. It had been rather like trying to chase a whirlwind.

On the 16th March orders were received for two companies to proceed immediately to Krasnovodsk, a port on the eastern shores of the Caspian and the main port of entry to Russian Central Asia, there to relieve two companies of the Royal Warwicks. The Right Wing, under Captain Bunn, was detailed for this. Battalion Headquarters and the Left Wing had orders to follow upon relief by Headquarters and two companies of the 84th Punjabis. The Right Wing sailed for Krasnovodsk on the 20th March.

The situation at Krasnovodsk was very much the same as elsewhere. A local government had been formed styling itself the Republic of Askabad. Its political complexion, as in the case of the other republics, followed the personal views—and often the personal interests—of the man who talked the loudest and the longest; he usually got himself elected President. All these republics, however, had one common orientation—they were all violently anti-Russian, and looked to the British to protect them both from Denikin and from the Bolsheviks.

Some very weak and unreliable forces of the Russian counter-revolutionists were holding the Bolsheviks in doubtful check on the Oxus River somewhere between Bokhara and Merv. There was a small British force between Meshed in Persia and Askabad, the Russian frontier town, which was endeavouring to encourage and assist the anti-Bolshevik forces. The local inhabitants were mostly

Turkoman and Saat, nomadic Mohammedan tribes who disliked being interfered with and only wanted to live and let live according to their lights.

Owing to lack of ships it was not until the 1st April that Battalion Headquarters and the Left Wing got away from Petrovsk, arriving at Krasnovodsk, and there joining the Right Wing, on the 3rd April. That the Left Wing took two days to make the crossing, which normally occupies twenty-four hours, was due to bad weather. Its two transports were at one time blown in the wrong direction almost to Baku. Water and food had to be rationed.

The Caspian Sea is very treacherous. A perfectly calm and windless day gives no indication of what may happen within half an hour, when a sudden storm may lash the sea to fury within a few minutes. The Royal Warwicks, who, on relief by the Battalion, sailed from Krasnovodsk on the 7th April, should have reached Baku on the following morning; they ran into a storm, however, and were still missing on the 11th. Search and relief ships with rations were sent out, but no news of them could be gained along the coast. Eventually their transport was found in a small port on the southern shores of the Caspian, five hundred miles from its destination. No casualties had occurred, but there was practically nothing to eat, and water was just running out when they made the little Persian port. It appeared that at one time they had actually been in sight of the lights of Baku, but unable to make that port.

On the 2nd May Headquarters and two companies of the Battalion received orders to return to Petrovsk, where trouble was feared, as the

Bolsheviks were now out of the ice at Astrakhan and might at any moment become active. It took "C" and "D" Companies four days to get away. Orders were given to utilise the shipping in the port. At first the crews refused to transport British troops; after the usual conference they decided that they would sail; then it was found that one of the ships had no ballast. By that time the crews had disappeared. The ship was then moved by her officers to another berth, where "D" Company embarked and filled her holds with sand. Eventually crews were found, but more conferences had to be held. Finally, "D" Company had again to disembark on to another ship which had arrived from Baku.

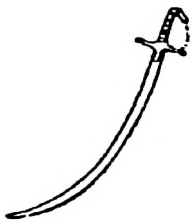
Petrovsk was full of scares, and nerves were on edge. The Hill Government was vacillating between relying on Denikin's forces or going over to the Bolsheviks; they meant to be on the winning side, but could not make up their minds who would win. The local commander of Denikin's volunteer army was General Prjevalski, the hero of Erzerum. He had about four thousand rifles, the remnants of Bicharakov's Cossacks. Bicharakov himself had been persuaded to retire to Europe on a propaganda campaign. There was also an armoured train, without which no private army was complete in those days, but, since the track was broken, the effect of the train was purely moral. In this case, however, the train belonged to the Hill Government and the guns to Denikin, which was always a source of trouble when anybody wanted to move the train.

Battalion Headquarters and the two Left Wing companies remained at Petrovsk for a month, during which the British Naval and Air Forces were frequently in action and sustained casualties. There were scares almost daily that the Bolsheviks would attempt a landing at Petrovsk, but these came to nothing. The detachment of the Battalion had a busy time digging trenches to protect the harbour. By the end of May, however, all had quietened down.

On the 5th June orders were received for Headquarters and the two Left Wing companies of the Battalion to return once more to Krasnovodsk, as the Bolsheviks were reported to be threatening Askabad. This part of the Battalion left Petrovsk on the 7th June and arrived at Krasnovodsk, and there joined the Right Wing on the following day.

Owing to the capture of Merv by the Bolsheviks in May and the consequent demoralisation of the Russian volunteer army opposing them, it was decided to send one company of British troops to Oufrah, with a view to strengthening the defences there. Oufrah was on the coast about four miles south of Krasnovodsk, and constituted the right of the twelve miles of line constructed for the defence of Krasnovodsk.

On the morning of the 12th June " B " Company of the Battalion moved up by steamer to Oufrah, and took up its quarters in the old Russian hospital lines at the end of the Oufrah Peninsular. Before the war Oufrah had been the quarantine station for passengers between Asiatic and European Russia. The accommodation was excellent, pukka bungalows,



clean, light, and in first-class condition. However, life was no picnic there, for all rations and all water had to be sent from Krasnovodsk, and boats were often hard to obtain. The great difficulty was boots. Constant marching and moving about from place to place had had their effect on the men's boots. We were now a long way from the base, and there was much delay over transport.

Every day the men marched out from Krasnovodsk and Oufrah to the defence line, which here ran along the top of the cliffs between Krasnovodsk and Oufrah. There they worked on lunettes, wire entanglements, and roads. As often as not, however, numbers of the men had to be left behind because they had no boots fit to work in. Two roads for pack transport were dug and blasted round the cliffs, and dozens of strong posts were constructed above them. Conditions were hard; the weather was very hot, and water, which was brought from Baku in oil tankers, was scarce. The local water was so brackish that not even the Battalion's mules would drink it, and the imported water was strongly flavoured with oil. During this period many White refugees from the Askabad front had to be dealt with.

The doctor of the Russian hospital at Oufrah was glad to see us. He and his wife were pathetic figures. Formerly he had been a very rich man and a famous Surgeon-General in the old Russian Army, but now he was glad to get this job of running the hospital. There were few patients, and there were no supplies, doctors, or nurses. The General himself had received no pay, and had lost all his

The Caucasus

private fortune. He and his wife, who had once been a famous operatic singer, were now often hungry, and at the best had had only boiled rice to eat for months.

For some time there had been persistent rumours that the Italians were coming to occupy the Caucasus, and that all British troops would be withdrawn. Eventually, on the 2nd August, orders were received that the evacuation was to take place without fail on the 4th August. On the 4th August, therefore, the Battalion sailed from Krasnovodsk, and after nine days in Baku entrained for Batum, eventually arriving at Constantinople on the 22nd August. The Italians refused to occupy the Caucasus, and in the end the republics went over to the Bolsheviks; they are now part of the U.S.S.R.

Turkey

On the 22nd August 1919 "C" and "D" Companies of the Battalion arrived at Constantinople on board H.M.S. *Tagus*, together with the 1/10th Jats, and after some delay disembarked at Haidar Pasha, on the Asiatic side of the water, on the following day. "A" and "B" Companies and the transport had been left behind at Batum until shipping was available; the companies joined up with the Battalion on the 27th August and the transport some weeks later.

Haidar Pasha was a large station, but only one building remained more or less intact, the remainder having been destroyed by fire during the war. The railway line was complete to Cairo but not to Baghdad, although many of the trains bore large brass plates marked "Baghdad."

Turkey

The Left Wing's destination was a camp beside the Anatolian railway, known, presumably because of its distance up the line, as "Kilo 28½." Upon disembarking at Haidar Pasha the Wing was informed that it would have to be ready to entrain for Kilo 28½ in one hour's time—a somewhat "tall order" in view of the fact that about eighty tons of Battalion kit and stores had to be unloaded from a lighter and reloaded on to the train! However, by dint of very hard work the loading was accomplished in three hours, and the Wing moved up to Kilo 28½ that afternoon.

At Kilo 28½ the camp space available for the Wing proved to be only forty by forty yards, surrounded by broken ground. However, difficulties were got over, and it was arranged that the Battalion should take over the space allotted to the 1/10th Jats. Soon afterwards the camp vacated by the 2nd Rajputs became available. This latter was comparatively luxurious, being fitted with cookhouses and latrines. No sooner was the Battalion more or less comfortably settled in, however, than orders were received to move to Eski Shehr in Anatolia.

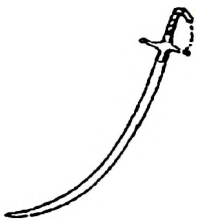
The situation at Eski Shehr was very much the same as all through Anatolia. The Turkish soldiery were being disbanded under the terms of the Armistice, but as soon as they were free of the old Regular army they joined the new Nationalist forces. These, which were eventually to become the new Turkish Army under Mustapha Kemal, were at that time a rabble of bandits under various partisan leaders. Their principal occupation was raiding villages for

food and stores, and munition dumps wherever such could be found.

On the 21st September 1919 the Battalion arrived at Eski Shehr, whence "C" Company, under Captain E. N. Harris, was immediately despatched to Afion Kara Hissar.

Afion Kara Hissar is famous for its large Black Rock, which rises up out of the centre of the town. It is one of the places where a number of British prisoners from Kut were kept during the war. "C" Company arrived there on the 23rd September, and were met by the C.O. of the 8th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, a unit which was at that time only some two hundred strong. The company, acting as a reinforcement to the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, took up the duties of guarding ammunition dumps and providing guards on the trains travelling between Afion and Eski Shehr, the Italians providing guards to and from Konia. There was little excitement. Only on one occasion did a small party of Turkish marauders attempt an attack on the ammunition dump. Two were captured and handed over to the Turkish authorities. On the 10th October "C" Company and the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry were relieved by the 25th Punjabis, "C" Company returning to the Battalion at Eski Shehr.

On the 13th October, after a more or less uneventful stay, the Battalion left Eski Shehr to travel down the line *via* Kilo 28½ to Bostanjik, where, after the usual difficulties over transport had been encountered and overcome, it arrived on the morning of the 14th October.



The camp site at Bostanjik was at first very small; it was, moreover, situated on a heather ridge and very exposed to the weather. Later, however, the Battalion moved into a permanent winter camp down the hill. Duties consisted of guarding ammunition dumps. No. 4 Platoon, under Subadar Jogi Chand, was sent to Prinkipo Island to take over guard duty on the Austrian Prisoners' Camp. Parades were recommenced, Lewis-gun classes and musketry instruction were carried on, and three miniature rifle ranges were built. The training ground was very good.

On the 13th December "B" Company, under Captain L. G. W. Hamber and Lieutenant H. E. Madge, proceeded to Constantinople to take over guard duties at General Headquarters.

The month of January 1920 was marred by an epidemic of influenza, and the Battalion was immediately segregated. There were many cases, but fortunately only one death.

On the 18th January "A" Company, under Captain Tirebuck, was also detailed to proceed to Constantinople to take over the Turkish armoury at Matchka. In spite of expectations to the contrary the armoury was taken over without incident.

By the end of February 1920 the whole Battalion was in Constantinople. The move was much appreciated. Conditions at Constantinople were luxurious; the barracks were central heated and spring mattresses were issued to the men; above all, the food was excellent. Turkish tailors were procured, and much-needed new clothing was made.

Turkey

In April the Battalion football team, captained by Captain Barstow, won the Inter-Battalion Football Competition for Indian battalions.

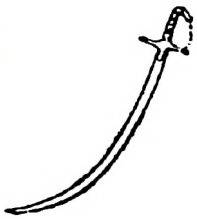
The time spent in Constantinople was most interesting. The city was under the international control of the British, French, Italians, and Greeks. There was a cosmopolitan population, which included a large number of Russian refugees. The local Turkish population was passive, but it was sullen, and outside Constantinople Kemal was daily increasing his strength.

There was little excitement apart from a comprehensive raid in March to round up Kemalist agitators. Two parties from the Battalion, under Captain Bunn and Lieutenant Gamble, took part in this raid and captured a well-known agitator.

Return to India

During September 1920, when the Battalion had been in Constantinople about nine months, information was received that all Indian units would shortly be returning to India, and arrangements were made accordingly. On the 9th October the Battalion embarked for India on H.M.H.T. *Huntspill*. Sir Henry Wilson, officiating as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Black Sea, interviewed the British and Gurkha officers and expressed regret at the Battalion's departure. General Croker, in saying good-bye, remarked that earlier in the year the Battalion had been specially selected for guard duty at General Headquarters in Constantinople because it was considered to be a model of smartness and efficiency on guard duty.

Return to India



The following British officers returned with the Battalion to India :—

Lt.-Col. H. St G. Scott, D.S.O., Commanding.
Capt. W. Bunn.
Capt. E. N. Harris.
Capt. C. T. Tirebuck.
Capt. H. L. Barstow.
Capt. L. Gamble.
Capt. A. R. Nye, M.C.
Capt. H. E. Madge.

Major H. E. W. Bell-Kingsley, D.S.O., Second in Command, and Captain L. H. Brunlees, Adjutant, were on leave in England.

Of these officers, Major Bell-Kingsley and Captains Brunlees and Nye were the only ones who had been with the Battalion in Basra in March 1916 at the beginning of its service overseas.

On the morning of the 2nd November 1920 the Battalion marched into Bakloh after an absence of six years, over four and a half of which had been spent overseas. It received a great reception from the 1st Battalion, and everyone looked forward to a long period with the two Battalions together once more. This was not to be, however, for within a few days the 1st Battalion had to leave Bakloh to join the Wana Column in Waziristan. It returned to Bakloh in 1923, just in time to see the 2nd Battalion off to the Khyber, and it was not until 1925 that the two Battalions of the Regiment found themselves really together for a long spell after practically eleven years of separation.

CHAPTER XIV.

1ST BATTALION.

Waziristan, 1917

WHEN, on the 2nd March 1916, the 1st Battalion arrived back at Bakloh from service in France and Gallipoli, its strength was 8 British officers, 20 Gurkha officers, and 714 Gurkha other ranks. The British officers were as follows :—

Major A. B. Tillard, D.S.O., Commanding.
Bt.-Major L. P. Collins, D.S.O.
Capt. J. R. Hartwell, Adjutant.
Lieut. R. V. Brandon, 18th Infantry.
Lieut. A. W. Woodhead, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. H. E. Giles, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. S. G. Mellis-Smith, I.A.R.O.
Lieut. W. Ross-Stewart, I.M.S.

The list of officers who left Bakloh with the Battalion in 1914 appears at the beginning of Chapter VIII., and a comparison of that list with the list appearing on this page will show that of the British officers who left Bakloh with the Battalion in 1914 only one subsequently returned with the Battalion in 1916. This officer was Major Collins. Of the rest, in 1916, Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Travers was Cable Censor at Madras ; Major B. U.

Waziristan, 1917

Nicolay was Extra Assistant Military Secretary to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief; Captain R. C. B. Yates, Captain A. M. Rundall, and Captain D. Inglis were dead, killed at Givenchy; Captain M. T. Cramer-Roberts was wounded and in England; and Captain M. Wylie was a prisoner of war in Germany.

The depot at Bakloh was, of course, a scene of great industry. During the first two years of the War nearly 1200 recruits were trained there and passed into the ranks. Even this was by no means the highest figure in the War. In 1917 the 2nd Battalion depot had 1300 recruits at one time. With the return to India of the 1st Battalion the flow of men was naturally diverted to the 2nd Battalion, recently arrived in Mesopotamia; and during May, June, July, and August of 1916 no less than 226 Gurkha officers and other ranks were sent from Bakloh to reinforce that Battalion. Some of these were recruits, some were 1st Battalion men now transferred for service to the 2nd Battalion, and some were of the 2nd Battalion who had been transferred to the 1st Battalion for service in France and were now being retransferred to their original Battalion in Mesopotamia. Meanwhile leave was granted to as many of the 1st Battalion as could be spared, and on the 8th May 4 Gurkha officers and 160 Gurkha other ranks proceeded to Nepal on five months' special furlough.

Towards the end of May Major A. B. Tillard, D.S.O., relinquished the acting command of the Battalion and went off to Mesopotamia to take command of the 2/7th Gurkhas. His place was

taken by Major A. E. Sealy of the 2nd Battalion. Shortly afterwards Major Sealy was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel, to date from the 24th May.

Waziristan, 1917

The following British officers joined the 1st Battalion between the date of its return in March 1916 and the end of the same year :—

Lieut. K. M'Lean, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. F. E. C. Hughes.
2nd Lieut. B. A. Ryan.
2nd Lieut. N. Burgan.
2nd Lieut. E. N. Harris.
2nd Lieut. P. C. Sanderson, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. H. C. Allington, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. R. A. Lawson.
2nd Lieut. R. C. Ryder, I.A.R.O.
Lieut. C. F. Hodding, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. A. G. Littledale, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. F. Williamson, I.A.R.O.
2nd Lieut. N. Downie, I.A.R.O.

Of these officers, 2nd Lieutenants Allington and Ryder and Lieutenant Hodding were transferred to the 2nd Battalion and left for Mesopotamia during the summer of 1916, as also did the following :—

Lieut. A. W. Woodhead.
2nd Lieut. S. G. Mellis-Smith.

Amidst these constant changes of officers and men the Battalion settled down as best it could to something approaching the normal work of peace-time, preparing itself for any further call that might be made upon its services. Such a call came early in 1917.

In December 1916 the Battalion moved to Burhan, near Rawal Pindi, to join the 16th Indian Division

Waziristan, 1917

for Brigade and Divisional training. Three months later, on the 4th March 1917, it was engaged on Divisional manœuvres in the vicinity of Burhan when it suddenly received orders to mobilise and proceed to Tank, in the Derajat. There it was to join the 44th Brigade, in support of the Derajat Brigade, which was operating across the border in Southern Waziristan.

The situation in Waziristan, as indeed on the whole frontier, had for some time been rather difficult. The border tribes, naturally excited by the War, had been indulging in a number of raids and attacks on isolated posts. Up to the beginning of 1917 their misdeeds had been allowed to pass almost unpunished, for the Government was unwilling to employ on the frontier troops which were so badly needed elsewhere. In February 1917, however, the tribes went too far. Stirred up by Mullah Fazl Din, the son of the notorious Mullah Powindah, a large lashkar of Mahsuds collected at Barwand and descended upon the near-by fort of Sarwekai, some thirty-five miles west of Tank. In the fighting which followed a British officer of the Waziristan Militia was killed. The Derajat Brigade at once moved out from Tank to Sarwekai, and the 44th Brigade, as already indicated, was ordered to concentrate in reserve at Tank.

The Battalion reached Tank on the 9th March. The 44th Brigade concentrated at Tank on the 11th, and the next day moved out to Jatta, some twelve miles to the south-west. It remained at Jatta until the 4th April, when, the Derajat Brigade having concluded its operations, it marched back

to Tank and began to disperse to peace stations. The dispersal had almost been completed, and the Battalion was at Darya Khan on the point of entraining for Pathankote, when orders were received that the Battalion was to return immediately and join the Derajat Brigade. Trouble on the frontier had broken out again.

The Battalion arrived back at Tank on the 14th April, and the next day the Right Wing, under Major L. P. Collins, D.S.O.—strength, 4 British officers, 10 Gurkha officers, and 371 Gurkha other ranks—left with the machine-gun section to join the Derajat Brigade at Nili Kach, about twenty-five miles to the south-west. Headquarters and the Left Wing remained for the time being at Tank, doing ordinary convoy and lines of communication work.

The Right Wing joined the Derajat Brigade at Nili Kach on the 16th April, and marched with it *via* Tanai to Wana, taking part in a skirmish on the way. After a short stay at Wana the Brigade returned to Tanai. From Tanai the Right Wing of the Battalion and one company of the 11th Rajputs (now the 5/7th Rajput Regiment) were sent to Sarwekai, where, together with a detachment of the South Waziristan Militia and two immobile 2.5 screw guns, they formed the garrison of Sarwekai Fort under Major Collins. The machine-guns were sent to join the Left Wing, which in the meantime had moved to Nili Kach. The task of the Right Wing at Sarwekai was to intercept and inflict loss on raiding parties of Mahsuds.

The Mahsuds, it may be said here, are officially

Waziristan, 1917

classed as amongst the finest fighters in the world when operating in their own country. They are experts at attacking small parties, posts and convoys, and they have an astonishing faculty, when the enemy begins to retire, of appearing suddenly in places which a moment before seemed quite deserted, and thence harrying the rear-guard with ferocious determination. Owing to their activity, mobility, and general watchfulness it is exceedingly difficult to outflank them or to cut off their retreat.

On the 9th May, a few days after the arrival of the Right Wing at Sarwekai, the Political Agent reported that a party of between 200 and 300 Mahsuds had been seeking an opportunity for an attack on a post or convoy in the Gomal River valley. This party, now returning homewards, was likely to pass down the Sheranna Algad, some six miles east of Sarwekai, on the next day.

Major Collins decided to try to intercept the party by establishing, before dawn on the 10th May, a line of piquets astride the Sheranna Algad.

In the fort with the Militia was a very remarkable man, Subadar Mohibulla, Sardar Bahadur, I.O.M., an Afridi and a famous killer of Mahsuds. Mohibulla knew the ground perfectly, and from the fort pointed out the most suitable positions for the piquets.

Major Collins, anxious to effect a surprise, decided to move out under cover of darkness, and at 1 A.M. on the 10th May he left the fort with "A" and "B" Companies of the Battalion (250 strong), one company of the 11th Rajputs (80 strong) under Captain T. T. Laville, and 100 men of the South

Waziristan Militia under Captain G. H. Russell of the 126th Baluchistan Infantry.

At first all went well, and before dawn five piquets (marked one to five on the sketch), each of ten men of the Militia and forty regulars, had been posted as follows :—

No. 1, under Captain F. C. Davidson (I.C.S. and I.A.R.O.), South Waziristan Militia, and Jemadar Harka Sing Thapa, on Mamrez Sar to command the Palosi Ziarat gorge. This piquet moved later to Point 1 on the sketch.

Nos. 2, 3, and 4 on Long Ridge on the left (west) bank of the Sheranna Algad. Of these, the first two were held by the 11th Rajputs—No. 2 under Captain Laville, and No. 3 under Subadar Narayan Singh (later Honorary Captain, Sardar Bahadur, O.B.I., I.D.S.M.)—and the last by the 1/4th Gurkhas.

No. 5, on the right (east) bank of the Sheranna Algad, held by the 1/4th Gurkhas.

The reserve occupied a low spur in the Sheranna Algad, between Nos. 4 and 5 piquets, marked " R " on the sketch.

Soon after dawn No. 5 piquet reported smoke rising from a nullah about 1000 yards east of its position. Subadar Mohibulla, with fifty men of the Militia and fifty of the 1/4th Gurkhas under Subadar Gunjbir Gurung, was ordered to reconnoitre the nullah, and to inflict on the Mahsuds as heavy losses as possible, but to withdraw before becoming seriously engaged. At the same time No. 1 piquet was ordered to move from Mamrez Sar to the position marked 1 on the sketch, at about the junction of the Sheranna Algad and the Khuzma Road, and about 1500 yards south-west of Long Ridge. This left Mamrez Sar unguarded.

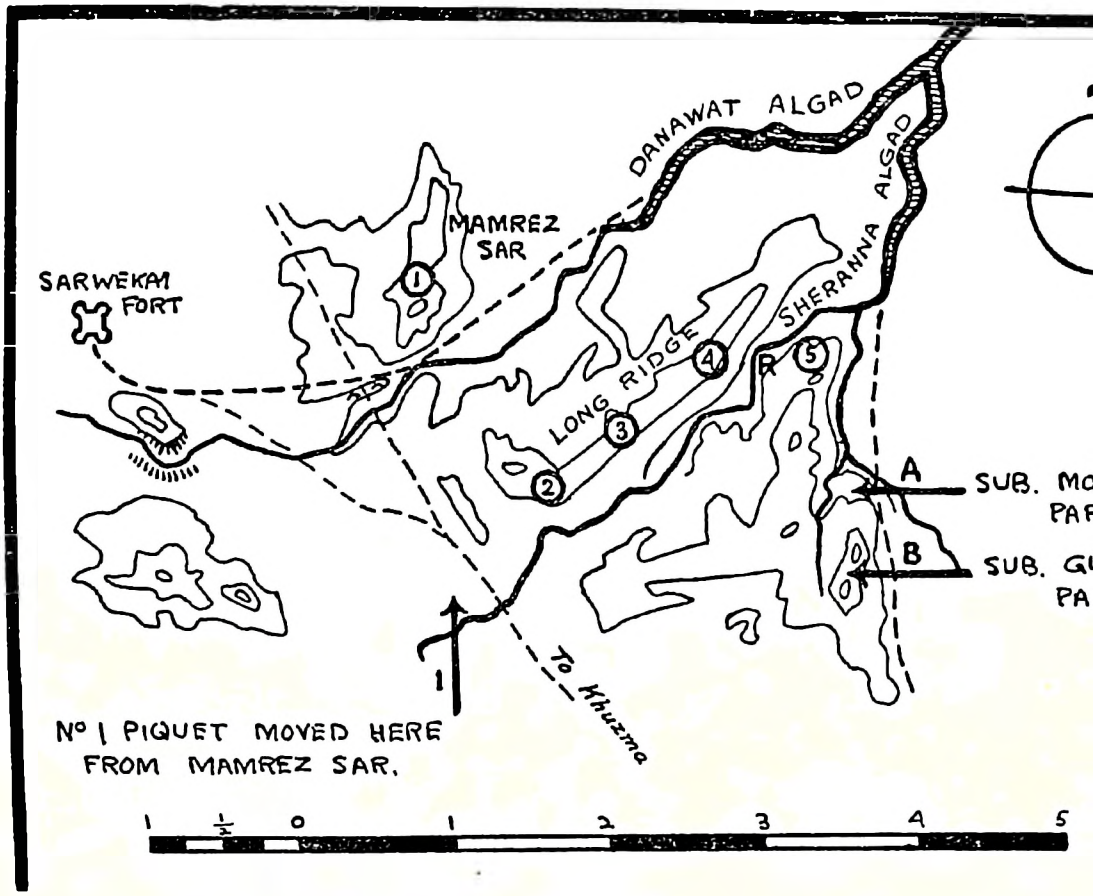
Subadar Mohibulla, covering his right (southern) flank with Subadar Gunjbir's party at the point

marked " B " on the sketch, crept with his party of Militia to a position marked " A " on the sketch, overlooking the nullah from which the smoke was rising. A party of Mahsuds was found to be cooking there. The Militia opened fire and knocked over about thirteen or fourteen Mahsuds. Unfortunately the South Waziristan Militia were armed only with single-loading rifles. This fact greatly handicapped them, both at this time and throughout the ensuing fight.

As soon as the firing started it became obvious that the Mahsuds were in far greater strength than had been expected. Parties of them appeared suddenly on all sides of the detachments of the two Subadars and swarmed to the attack. The majority of the Mahsuds were on the high ground south of Subadar Gunjbir; these attacked our men at point " B " with the greatest fury, and a desperate hand-to-hand struggle followed.

Unfortunately both the Subadars were wounded, and their men began to withdraw towards No. 5 piquet. Major Collins was having considerable difficulty in seeing what was taking place. It was evident, however, that the withdrawing detachments must be helped. He therefore ordered a counter-attack by the remainder of his reserve.

Skilfully and gallantly led by Captain Russell, this counter-attack accomplished its purpose and covered the retirement of the two Subadars' detachments. The Mahsuds, however, were now flushed with success, and at once renewed their attack with the utmost courage. Not only was No. 5 piquet heavily attacked, but the Mahsuds pushed on down



ACTION NEAR SARWEKAI — 10TH MAY 19

the Sheranna Algad and threatened to cut off Major Collins and his men from Long Ridge. Major Collins and Captain Russell, exposing themselves recklessly and leading several counter-attacks, skilfully conducted a withdrawal to Long Ridge. This was effectively covered by the fire of the piquets on the Ridge, the steadiness of the 11th Rajputs saving a nasty situation.

Unfortunately fire from the Ridge could not reach the bed of the Sheranna Algad, where heavy fighting occurred. It was here that 2nd Lieutenant F. Williamson (I.A.R.O.), who was attached to the Battalion, was killed, being cut off while trying to carry back a wounded man. The Mahsuds stated afterwards that he killed six of them before he was shot through the head.

Brought to a standstill by the steady defence of Long Ridge, the Mahsuds divided and made for the flanks, threatening to get between the force and Sarwekai Fort, and thus forcing a further withdrawal.

The fierce nature of the fighting, the rapidity with which events had occurred, and the wounding of Subadars Mohibulla and Gunjbir had all led to a certain amount of confusion, and it was necessary to reorganise on the line of Long Ridge before the withdrawal could be continued. This reorganisation was covered most adequately by the company of the 11th Rajputs.

To cover the further withdrawal a party of the Militia was detailed to reoccupy Mamrez Sar, left unheld by the move of No. 1 piquet to the Khuzma Road. Up to this time No. 1 piquet had not been engaged.

The withdrawal was now continued towards Mamrez Sar, the left flank being threatened by a fresh Mahsud lashkar coming from the north to join in the fight. Fortunately this enemy reinforcement was held off by a detachment of the Militia, assisted by the fire of the two guns from near Sarwekai Fort.

As soon as the withdrawal from Long Ridge commenced No. 4 piquet was heavily attacked. Effective covering fire from No. 3 piquet enabled this attack to be driven off. When, however, No. 4 piquet commenced its withdrawal the enemy swarmed forward again and soon reached close quarters. It appeared as though the piquet garrison must be overwhelmed. At this critical moment Subadar Narayan Singh led a dashing counter-attack from No. 3 piquet. The Rajputs, pressing forward to close quarters, drove back the leading enemy and checked the attack until our men got clear. Subadar Narayan Singh then withdrew his men to his own piquet.

No. 3 piquet now itself withdrew, and took up a position west of Long Ridge to support the withdrawal of Captain Laville and No. 2 piquet.

No. 2 piquet had been heavily attacked by the enemy, and now had to withdraw down the north-west spur of Long Ridge. It was pressed hard, and suffered several casualties, including Jemadar Bhagi Singh of the 11th Rajputs, killed. Its withdrawal was marked by two very gallant acts.

Lance-Naik Ramnath Singh, seeing one of his wounded comrades about to fall into the hands of the enemy, charged back to his rescue, and was killed while defending the wounded man with the bayonet against a number of the enemy. A

Waziristan, 1917

little later Naik Shiuparsad Singh went back to almost certain death to help a man of the 1/4th Gurkhas who was wounded in the leg. Unfortunately the enemy were pressing forward with vigour, and the gallant Lance-Naik was shot down and killed in the fight round the wounded Gurkha. Both these brave Rajputs were posthumously awarded the Indian Order of Merit.

Once No. 2 piquet had got clear the pursuit slackened off, and the remainder of the withdrawal was not heavily pressed. The enemy were found to be occupying Mamrez Sar, having forestalled the party of Militia sent thither, but since they were not in strength and their fire was too wild to be effective it was not found necessary to drive them off the hill. The retirement continued, covered by the fire of a party sent out from the fort. No. 1 piquet, which was responsible for the protection of the right flank, reported that there was no enemy in its vicinity. The fort was reached without, apparently, any further incident.

Once inside the fort, however, it was discovered that complete disaster had overtaken No. 1 piquet. This piquet had lost touch with the main body during the withdrawal. Moving in two parties, it had followed a route which led across two deep nullahs, and in these nullahs the two halves of the piquet had been surprised by the enemy. Furious hand-to-hand fighting had ensued, in which the piquet had been practically annihilated, and in which the enemy must also have suffered heavy casualties. Both Captain F. C. Davidson of the

South Waziristan Militia and Jemadar Harka Sing Thapa had been killed.

This account of the disaster, told by a few survivors, was confirmed next day when the scenes of these fights were located and the evidence of the desperate struggle was examined. No. 13 Rifleman (now Jemadar) Tejbir was discovered wounded in one of the nullahs, having hidden in a bush pretending to be dead whilst the Mahsuds were removing their casualties. He affirmed that the meeting with the enemy had been a complete surprise to both parties, and that not only the piquet but the enemy as well had been practically annihilated.

When the main body completed its retirement and reached the fort it was about mid-day. The troops had then been on the move for about twelve hours, had suffered very severe casualties, and had taken part in that most exacting of all operations—a retirement in frontier warfare in close contact with a determined and very courageous enemy. It was imperative that they should be rested and fed before being called upon to make further efforts. Later in the day, however, and on the next day, Major Collins moved out and brought in a number of wounded and buried the dead.

Thus ended perhaps the most severe frontier engagement in which the Battalion has ever taken part. It was later revealed that on this occasion the Mahsuds had had reason to fight with even more than their usual ferocity. They had long wished to square accounts with Mohibulla, who had been a thorn in their side for years, and with

this end in view they had entered the neighbourhood of Sarwekai with the deliberate intention of provoking an engagement. They had not expected a night operation, however, and when, at early dawn, they were fired on by Mohibulla's party they jumped to the conclusion that they had been betrayed and surrounded. Consequently they flung themselves into the fight with the fury born of desperation. This, followed by their initial success in forcing back Mohibulla's party, gave them an impetus which carried them through the action with a reckless disregard of casualties. In these circumstances heavy losses on both sides were inevitable. It is worth noting that subsequent to this fight the Mahsuds showed little inclination to try further conclusions with the Sarwekai column.

An extract from the official account of this fight in ' Operations in Waziristan ' runs as follows :—

" The strength of the enemy, who were almost exclusively armed with small-bore rifles, was estimated at between 400 and 500, and their losses were ascertained to have been over 70 killed or died of wounds, among them being their notorious leader, Sher Dil. Our casualties were 2 British officers, 2 Indian officers, and 36 rank and file killed ; 3 Indian officers and 60 rank and file wounded ; and 70 Indian rank and file missing."

Most of those missing were afterwards found to have been killed.

" Though our losses in this engagement were severe, those inflicted on the enemy were also heavy, and it was reported that the Mahsuds regarded the encounter in the nature of a defeat and paid a tribute to the steadiness and valour displayed by the Gurkhas in the hand-to-hand fighting that took place."

That this tribute from one brave race to another was well deserved can be judged from the fact that, out of the total casualties of 172, no less than 124 were borne by the 1/4th Gurkhas—that is, fifty per cent of their strength—in the action. But we must regret that due credit was not given in this official account for the share taken in the action by the other troops. The splendid stand made on Long Ridge by the officers and men of the 11th Rajputs, and the offensive spirit displayed by them, were beyond all praise. But for the skill in frontier warfare of Captain Russell and his men of the South Waziristan Militia the operation could not have been undertaken at all. The protection that the Militia gave to the northern flank during the withdrawal was invaluable, and without it the operation would have been even more costly than it was.

The Battalion's casualties on this day were as follows :—

Killed.—2nd Lieutenant F. Williamson, Jemadar Harka Sing Thapa, and 92 Gurkha other ranks.

Wounded.—Subadar Gunjbir Gurung, Jemadar Ganj Sing Gurung, and 26 Gurkha other ranks.

Missing.—2 Gurkha other ranks. Both proved to have been taken prisoner, and both were released in June 1917. They were fairly well treated by the Mahsuds.

The following individual awards were made for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty :—

1/4TH GURKHA RIFLES.

INDIAN ORDER OF MERIT.

No. 766 Rifleman Mandhoj Thapa, for most conspicuous courage and devotion to duty. He helped to carry Captain Davidson of the South Waziristan Militia when the latter was

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wounded, and continued to do so, though himself severely wounded in the eye, until Captain Davidson was shot dead. He engaged the enemy at close quarters and finally escaped. Later he was also awarded the French Croix de Guerre with Palms, a decoration normally only given to officers.

INDIAN DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL.

Jemadar Ragbir Thapa, for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in command of his platoon throughout the day.

No. 4290 Havildar Kharak Sing Pun, for conspicuous gallantry. He commanded his platoon with great coolness and courage throughout the withdrawal. He was later awarded also the French Medaille Militaire.

No. 131 Naik Dalbahadur Gurung. Throughout the day he set a fine example of courage and devotion to duty, and handled his men with great skill.

No. 4512 Lance-Naik Gagan Sing Rana, for great gallantry and skilful leading of his section throughout the day.

No. 263 Rifleman Nande Gharti. When his N.C.O.'s had been killed or wounded he took command of his section and led it with skill and gallantry.

No. 4588 Rifleman Dhanbahadur Gurung.

No. 672 Rifleman Balbir Pun.

No. 910 Rifleman Taune Gurung, all three for conspicuous gallantry in hand-to-hand fighting. They attacked and dispersed a superior body of enemy which was blocking the line of withdrawal and inflicted heavy losses on it.

11TH RAJPUTS.

INDIAN ORDER OF MERIT (posthumous).

No. 1624 Naik Shiuparsad Singh.

No. 2189 Lance-Naik Ramnath Singh.

INDIAN DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL.

Subadar Narayan Singh.

No. 2086 Lance-Naik Manni Singh.

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN MILITIA.

CROIX DE GUERRE (FRENCH).

Captain G. H. Russell, 126th Baluchistan Infantry.

Meanwhile the Headquarters and Left Wing of the Battalion had moved from Tank on the 9th May, arriving on the 13th at Nili Kach, and there joining the Derajat Brigade. It was not long before this half of the Battalion, too, was involved in a stiff action with the Mahsuds.

It happened that at that time a very large convoy of camels had to be escorted from Nili Kach over the Gwalerai Narai to Khajuri Kach, about twelve miles to the south-west. This convoy was so large that it was decided to move it in two echelons, half the Brigade escorting each echelon. The first echelon marched on the 15th May and reached Khajuri Kach without incident.

The second echelon, escorted by the Headquarters and Left Wing of the Battalion, together with the 1st Nepalese Rifles, the whole under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel A. E. Sealy, 1/4th Gurkhas, marched at 6 A.M. on the 16th, with one company of the Battalion acting as advanced guard. The track led from Nili Kach fort to the Chota Gwalerai Nullah, followed that nullah for about a mile, and then, crossing the Chota Gwalerai Kotal, dropped into the main Gwalerai East Nullah, which it followed to the Gwalerai Narai and thence along the Gwalerai West Nullah to Khajuri Kach.

At first all went well, and there were no signs of the enemy. At 8.15 A.M. the vanguard, one platoon of "C" Company of the Battalion, under 2nd Lieutenant N. Downie, I.A.R.O., reached the Chota Gwalerai Kotal. From there the vanguard pushed on into the main Gwalerai East Nullah,

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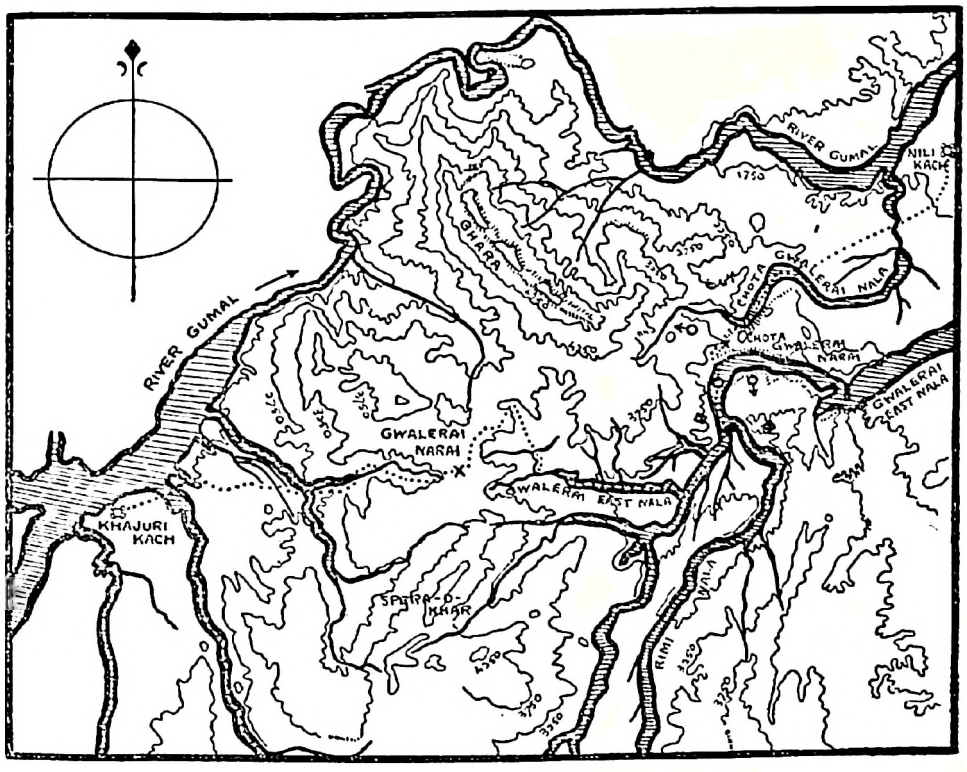
without waiting for the piquets, which were moving up, to get into position.

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, a large party of Mahsuds, which had lain in ambush in the main nullah and on both sides of it, opened fire. At the very first volley nearly the whole of the vanguard platoon was shot down, only two men escaping. A party of Mahsud swordsmen then charged forward to murder the wounded and capture the rifles of the fallen.

Just at this moment the supporting platoon from the main guard, under Subadar Ramkishan Rana, reached the edge of the main nullah. It opened fire at once and drove the charging Mahsuds back to cover. Then followed a desperate fight fire between Subadar Ramkishan's platoon and the Mahsuds for the wounded men and the rifles. For a long time neither could reach the spot where the vanguard had been shot down. At last, however, a section under No. 4430 Havildar Kum Sing Gurung fought its way along the left (western) bank of the main nullah and drove the enemy from the cliffs just above where the wounded men and rifles were lying. This fine action enabled Subadar Ramkishan to get in all the wounded and most of the rifles before he was ordered to withdraw. For their gallantry in this action Subadar Ramkishan and Havildar Kum Sing were awarded the Indian Distinguished Service Medal.

In the meantime the remainder of the column had become heavily engaged. As soon as the first shots were fired at the vanguard the enemy appeared on the high ground on both sides of the route. Very

GWALERAI NARAI



1 0 1 2 3 4 5 MILES

ROUTE OF CONVOY .....

PLACE WHERE VAN GUARD WAS SHOT DOWN ♂

PIQUETS MOVING INTO POSITION ♂

ENEMY AMBUSH ▬ ▬ ▬

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soon all the piquets that were already in position were heavily engaged. Rushing down between the piquets, too, the enemy attacked the main guard, and so prevented it from helping Subadar Ramkishan. It must be remembered that the troops were greatly hampered by the huge convoy of camels that they had to defend. They could not move far from the convoy or assume the offensive with freedom.

As time passed more and more of the enemy were seen to be advancing from the high ground to the westward, while communication could not be established with the troops at Khajuri Kach.

Realising that the whole convoy was in danger of capture by the enemy, and that in any case it would be impossible to force a way for it into Khajuri Kach before dark, Lieutenant-Colonel Sealy wisely decided to withdraw to Nili Kach. It was not till orders for this withdrawal were received that Subadar Ramkishan and his men abandoned their gallant attempts to recover the remainder of the rifles of the vanguard.

The withdrawal was hotly followed up by the enemy, but it was conducted with such skill that not only was the whole of the convoy saved but the casualties during this part of the operation were very slight. It was 8 P.M. before the rear-guard reached the shelter of the permanent piquets round Nili Kach.

The Battalion's casualties on this day were as follows :—

Killed.—2nd Lieutenant N. Downie, I.A.R.O. (attached); Jemadar Kharkbir Thapa, I.O.M.; and 21 Gurkha other ranks.

Wounded.—9 Gurkha other ranks.

There is no doubt that on this day Lieutenant-Colonel Sealy was given a task beyond the strength of his forces. Political information later proved that the enemy numbered at least two thousand men. A battalion and a half was not sufficient to guard such a large convoy in such difficult and broken country. The convoy was nearly four miles long on the route, so that most of the troops were absorbed in piquets. Both the advanced guard and the reserve were too small to clear the way against serious opposition. Two mountain guns had accompanied the convoy for a short distance, but had then returned to Nili Kach. The blame for the failure must fall upon those who set the column the impossible task.

Five days after this action, on the 21st May, the Headquarters and Left Wing of the Battalion marched to Khajuri Kach, acting as rear-guard to the 43rd Brigade. This time they accomplished the journey without incident. On the 22nd the Wing marched to Tanai, and on the 23rd to Wana. On the 25th it returned to Tanai, and on the 26th marched to Sarwekai, where it joined the Right Wing in perimeter camp beside the fort.

Some time previous to this it had been decided to punish the Mahsuds by an advance into the Khaisara Valley (half-way between Wana and Kaniguram, and not to be confused with the Khaisora, farther north). For this purpose the South Waziristan Field Force, the 43rd and 45th Brigades, had assembled at Jandola and had advanced, in the face of some opposition, through the Shahur Tangi to Barwand, about five miles north of Sarwekai.

Waziristan, 1917

During June the Battalion was ordered to join the 43rd Brigade at Barwand, which it did on the 19th. The 43rd Brigade was then made up as follows :—

Half Squadron 11th K.E.O. Lancers.
One section 1st Mountain Battery.
Two sections 30th Mountain Battery.
No. 7 Company 1st K.G.O. Sappers and Miners.
1/25th London Regiment.
54th Sikhs F.F.
1/4th Gurkha Rifles.
1st Nepalese Rifles.

On the 20th June the two Brigades marched about four miles north from Barwand to the western end of the Ispana Raghza. The enemy made a determined effort to stop the advance. They held a hill, Nanu Sar, flanking the raghza from the north. From this spur the enemy were driven by the 43rd Brigade, the position, as the official account states, being " attacked and carried with conspicuous dash by the 1/25th London Regiment and the 1/4th Gurkha Rifles."

The Battalion's attack was a model of how such things should be done. " A " and " C " Companies and the machine-guns worked forward to good covering fire positions, and heavily engaged the enemy with cross-fire. " B " and " D " Companies then moved forward and stormed the position under the accurate and effective fire support of the rest of the Battalion and of the 30th Mountain Battery. Heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy, both during the advance and as they fled northward after the capture of the position, while the Battalion's casualties were only one Gurkha other rank killed

and seven Gurkha other ranks wounded. That so good a result was obtained at such a low cost was due entirely to the excellent plan of attack.

On the next day, the 21st June, the 45th Brigade destroyed the village of Nanu, some miles north of camp, meeting with a good deal of opposition. The Battalion was employed in destroying villages near camp, and met with no opposition. On the 22nd the Battalion was employed on road protection duty half-way to Haidari Kach (or about four miles east of Barwand). No enemy were met with, but the heat was very great and the men suffered much for want of water.

On the 23rd June the two Brigades, less the 11th Rajputs and the Mahendradal Regiment (Nepalese), advanced from Barwand seven miles north-west to Narai Raghza, the 45th Brigade finding the advanced guard and piqueting troops. The column had to pass through the Narai Tangi, which at its narrowest point is only twelve feet wide. Considerable opposition was met with, and the advanced guard was unable to drive the enemy from the hills round the camping ground. The camp had to be established under enemy fire, and the camp piquets were heavily attacked.

During the march "D" Company of the Battalion acted as right flank guard to the transport, and was engaged with a small party of the enemy, of whom it killed four without loss to itself.

On arrival in camp, "B" and "C" Companies of the Battalion were sent on to reconnoitre towards the Shnawanai Narai, leading into the Khaisara Valley, which was found to be held in strength. The companies withdrew, reaching camp without

casualties at 6.30 P.M. At this time a piquet of the 1/25th London Regiment north of the camp was being hard pressed. To help this piquet "C" Company was ordered to drive the enemy from a spur beyond the piquet, some 1400 yards north-west of the camp. The company met with a good deal of opposition, but carried out its task with the loss of two men killed and seven wounded. Later, having been relieved by the 1st Nepalese Rifles, it returned to camp at 9.30 P.M., long after dark.

On the next day, the 24th June, the 43rd Brigade moved out and seized the Shnawanai Narai to enable the 45th Brigade to pass through and destroy the villages in the Khaisara Valley. The enemy held a position north of the route to the Narai. The 1st Nepalese Rifles seized and held a hill between the enemy's position and the route. The enemy, expecting an attack on their position, stood fast. Moving under cover of the Nepalese Rifles, the 54th Sikhs seized the real objective, the Narai, without opposition, while the 1/4th Gurkhas occupied the hills south of it.

The enemy, completely deceived, were thus cut off from the pass, and were able to offer no opposition to the passage of the 45th Brigade. The latter hurried through the Narai and gained the Khaisara before the enemy could get round to oppose the movement. Several important villages were destroyed. The 55th Coke's Rifles, employed to cover the work of destruction and to act as rear-guard during the first part of the withdrawal, was the only battalion heavily engaged. The 1/4th Gurkhas suffered no casualties on this day.

On the next day, the 25th June, the force returned to Ispana Raghza, the Battalion occupying a covering position until the transport had passed through the Narai Tangi and then withdrawing without opposition. The enemy had expected an advance, and were holding the Shnawanai Narai in strength. As soon as they realised that a withdrawal was taking place they hurried forward, but were held up by gun-fire and did not really get to grips with the rear-guard of the 45th Brigade.

On this day Lieutenant-Colonel Sealy handed over the command of the Battalion to take over that of the newly raised 3/6th Gurkhas. The latter battalion needed the services of a highly experienced and well tried officer more than did an old unit like the 1/4th. In Lieutenant-Colonel Sealy the Battalion lost an officer whose whole service had been devoted, with quite exceptional singleness of mind, to making himself and those under him worthy soldiers of His Majesty. His departure was indeed a heavy loss. His efficient methods have long been quoted in the Regiment as models of what should be.

The temporary command of the Battalion was taken over by Major L. P. Collins, D.S.O. At this time Captain A. M. Arnott of the 2/4th joined the Battalion.

The next few days were spent in destroying villages around Ispana Raghza, little opposition being encountered.

On the 29th June the force moved its camp three miles up-stream to Abbas Khel, ready for further operations. The Mahsuds, however, had received enough punishment, and asked for an armistice and

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discussion of terms of peace. The force remained at Abbas Khel while hostages were being brought in and the prisoners taken by the Mahsuds were released, including the two men of the Battalion captured at Sarwekai.

On the 11th July the 45th Brigade marched to Manzal, half-way back to Jandola, and the 43rd Brigade followed the next day. The two Brigades remained at Manzal until the 11th August, when, the Mahsuds having paid up the fines of rifles and money imposed on them, they marched to Jandola and dispersed.

The Battalion left Jandola on the 25th August, and, after some delay on the way, reached Bakloh on the 11th September.

The Battalion's battle casualties during the Waziristan campaign of 1917 amounted to :—

Killed.—2 British officers, 2 Gurkha officers, and 114 Gurkha other ranks.

Wounded.—2 Gurkha officers and 53 Gurkha other ranks.

Of the killed, 57 had at first been reported as missing. Of the wounded, 3 Gurkha other ranks subsequently died of wounds.

The following individual awards were made for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty :—

INDIAN ORDER OF MERIT.

No. 776 Rifleman Mandhoj Thapa.

INDIAN DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL.

Subadar Ramkishan Rana.
Jemadar Ragbir Thapa.
No. 4430 Havildar Kum Sing Gurung.
No. 4290 Havildar Kharak Sing Pun.
No. 131 Naik Dalbahadur Gurung.

No. 4512 Lance-Naik Gagan Sing Rana.
No. 263 Rifleman Nande Gharti.
No. 672 Rifleman Balbir Pun.
No. 910 Rifleman Taune Gurung.
No. 4588 Rifleman Dhanbahadur Gurung.

For its services in this campaign the Regiment was awarded the Battle Honour "N.-W. Frontier, India —1917."

The Waziristan campaign of 1917 had been a most arduous one. The heat had been very great, the temperature often rising to 125° in the shade, and the nights being little cooler than the days. Much of the time the troops had been without tents, while rations had been bad and none too plentiful, and water scarce except in the standing camps and forts. The work had been very hard. In the above account only the fighting has been described, but very few days had passed in which the troops were not engaged in gruelling road and convoy protection duties.

As a result of these hardships the health of all troops taking part in the expedition had been seriously impaired. Though it had not suffered more heavily than others in this respect, the Battalion was so weakened by malaria and other sickness that it was declared temporarily unfit for service and after a few months in Bakloh was ordered to Karachi for the benefit of the sea air.

On the 22nd November 1917, Lieutenant-Colonel A. B. Tillard, D.S.O., was appointed to the permanent command of the Battalion and joined on that date.

On the 25th November the Battalion left Bakloh for Karachi, arriving on the 1st December.

Waziristan, 1917

The Battalion remained at Karachi until the end of February 1918.

On the 24th February 1918 the Battalion received orders to proceed to Quetta to join the 2nd Quetta Brigade. Three days later, however, these orders were cancelled owing to the outbreak of trouble with the Marris in Baluchistan. The Depot was ordered to Quetta, but the Battalion was ordered to proceed on field service scale to Harnai, in Baluchistan, there to join the Marri Field Force.

Marri Expedition, 1918

The Marris, a warlike Baluch tribe, had been showing considerable unrest since about the middle of February 1918. On the night of the 19th-20th February they had made a spirited attack on the Political Agent, Sibi, who was then at Gumbaz. Using scaling ladders, some of them had actually penetrated into the fort of Gumbaz. Thus encouraged, the Marris then carried out a series of attacks on the railway line, and early in March burned some Government buildings at Munro. At about the same time the Khetrans, a neighbouring combination of tribes, rose, destroyed Government buildings at Barkhan, and looted the Treasury there. To punish these tribes, and to prevent the spread of unrest, two columns were organised: one, based on Harnai, to deal with the Marris by an advance on the Marri capital of Kahan; the other, based on Dera Ghazi Khan, to deal with the Khetrans. The command of the joint operations was given to Major-General R. Wapshare, C.B.

The Battalion left Karachi on the 1st March 1918.

It arrived at Harnai on the 3rd March, and was posted to the lines of communication between Harnai and Duki, relieving the 107th Pioneers at the different posts. The Harnai column then moved up to Duki, where it was concentrated by the 16th March. On the 17th March it was joined by two aeroplanes from Sibi, and soon afterwards several bombing raids were carried out on Kahan. General Wapshare later noted in his despatch that: "The moral effect of aeroplanes on the tribesmen appears to be very great, and quite out of all proportion to the material damage caused by bombs or Lewis-guns. Even direct hits do little damage to village buildings, but hostile gatherings melt away at the mere sound of a machine."

The Battalion remained throughout the campaign on the lines of communication between Harnai and Duki. The lines held were sixty miles long, through mountainous country, and required a good deal of piqueting, especially in the first twenty miles. On one occasion, towards the end of March, a piquet was rushed by a large number of Marris, and three Gurkha ranks were killed.

By the end of March most of the Khetran tribes had submitted. The Marris were still holding out, however, and the Harnai column went forward, marching *via* Kohlu and Bor. On the 4th April a force of about a thousand of the enemy was encountered at Hadb, but was outmanœuvred and routed with a loss of seventy dead and many more wounded. The column then moved on to Mamand, where it arrived on the 6th April and commenced

Marri Expedition, 1918

the destruction of crops and villages. Soon afterwards it was reinforced from the Dera Ghazi Khan column—which, owing to the collapse of the Khetrans, had been dispersed—and then continued its advance to Kahan, where it arrived on the 19th April without further opposition. The headmen, impressed perhaps by the arrival of the peace terms by aeroplane from Sibi, very soon submitted, and on the 2nd May the force commenced its return, arriving back at Harnai without incident and there being broken up.

On the 13th May 1918 the Battalion commenced to leave Harnai for Quetta, where the Depot had already been established, and by the 19th the move was completed.

Quetta, 1918-19

The Battalion now remained at Quetta for exactly a year, until the outbreak of the Third Afghan War in May 1919. During this time, as during the previous eight months, a very large number of British officers joined the Battalion. In fact, it may be worth recording that during the period of twenty months between the return of the Battalion from Waziristan in September 1917 and its departure for Afghanistan in May 1919 no less than forty-two British officers joined the Battalion for temporary or permanent service, while an almost equal number left the Battalion on transfer to other units, &c. During the same period a very large number of recruits was taken on the strength of the Battalion.

In many ways the Battalion found Quetta a good station. The standard of hockey and football was greatly improved, owing to opportunities for practice with other units. Indeed the Battalion only just

missed carrying off the Murree Brewery Shield for hockey. Shooting, too, was quite good. Pigeon were found in the Hannah Valley and near the Hannah Lake, while chikor and duck were also to be had.

Quetta, 1918-19

The Battalion was chosen to give Mountain Warfare Demonstrations to the British troops. In bayonet fighting and physical training it was reported as being the best unit in the station, and a party of 1/4th students at the Divisional School gave a demonstration in these subjects to the assembled British officers of the garrison.

In September 1918 a draft of the Battalion, consisting of 3 Gurkha officers and 110 men under Lieutenant Owens, was sent as a reinforcement to the 2/127th Baluchis in Palestine. This draft was augmented at Karachi by a full company of the 2/1st Gurkhas, and the two parties sailed in the same ship. Owing to lack of rifles and equipment the Battalion draft did not actually join the 2/127th until two months later, when the war was over. Thereafter the men spent two months on garrison duty in Alexandria, and later moved to Tel-el-Kebir, where there was a big camp for prisoners of war. The draft returned from Egypt in April 1919 with the 2/127th, and rejoined the Battalion at Quetta on the 4th of that month.

Third Afghan War, 1919

On the 6th May 1919 the Battalion received orders to mobilise. War had been declared on Afghanistan.

We had then been at peace with Afghanistan for a period of thirty-nine years. Abdur Rahman, placed on the throne of Afghanistan at the end of the Second

Third Afghan War, 1919

Afghan War (1880), had proved a capable ruler, and his relations with us had been friendly.

" On his death in 1901 Abdur Rahman was succeeded by his son Habibulla."

" From 1905 to 1914 Habibulla maintained, on the whole, a friendly attitude towards the Indian Government. When the great European War broke out, India's share in the world-wide conflagration was largely dependent on the attitude adopted by Afghanistan. Had the Amir proved hostile, it would not have been possible to denude India of troops for service on other fronts.

" Habibulla's position was made very difficult when Turkey entered the war. The Sultan of Turkey was the successor of the Prophet (Khalifa) and the head of the Islamic world in the eyes of orthodox or Sunni Mohammedans. The cause of the Khalifa was taken up with enthusiasm by the ignorant and fanatical priesthood, who wield great influence throughout Afghanistan and our North-West Frontier. . . . Notwithstanding this . . ., Habibulla continued to abide by his treaty engagements, and Afghanistan remained neutral.

" In October 1915 a Turco-German Mission arrived in Kabul under Captain von Hentig, who had formerly been a member of the German Embassy in Pekin." This Mission was accompanied by several Indian revolutionary leaders. Von Hentig was unsuccessful in his negotiations with the Amir, and eventually " left Afghanistan in disgust. . . . The Indians, however, remained in Kabul, and, under the high-sounding title of ' The Provisional Government of India,' opened a correspondence with the disaffected elements in India.

" Unsuccessful though von Hentig had been . . ., his intrigues with the Afghan party who were in favour of a war with India had a lasting effect. This faction was influential, and included Nasrulla, the brother of the Amir, the Amir's third son, Amanulla, . . . and the Commander-in-Chief, Nadir Khan.

" On the night of the 19th-20th February 1919, Habibulla was murdered whilst on a shooting trip in Laghman. . . . Nasrulla immediately proclaimed himself Amir. . . . Nasrulla soon found," however, " that he had underrated his nephew, Amanulla, who, . . . as soon as (he) heard of the murder, . . . assembled the notables and principal military officers and was proclaimed Amir by them on the 28th February.

" Feeling that his hold on the throne was none too secure, Amanulla secretly made preparations for a descent on India in order to divert popular opinion, and to pander to the War Party which had placed him on the throne. He summoned the headmen of the Pathan tribes to Kabul, warned them to be ready for war, and sent them back to their homes. He also sent emissaries with money and ammunition across the frontier to prepare the inflammable material in independent territory. Through the ' Provisional Government of India ' he began to intrigue with the revolutionary party in India.

" The Indian revolutionaries were the first to ' move,' and serious riots broke out at many places throughout the north-west part of India. Prompt military measures were taken at each place," however, " and the rioters were cowed by heavy casualties, especially at Amritsar.

" Meanwhile Afghan troops were moving towards the frontier. . . . On the 3rd May the first definite acts of hostility were committed, and India . . . was forced into war."—Official Account.

The forces then available in India consisted of three cavalry brigades, one mounted brigade, five independent infantry brigades, and seven divisions. Of these, the three cavalry brigades, the mounted brigade, and four out of the seven divisions formed the field army for service on the North-West Frontier. Of the five independent infantry brigades, three had their headquarters on the frontier itself—at Kohat, Bannu, and Derajat—and these three, therefore,

Third Afghan War, 1919

together with certain other garrison troops on the frontier, were attached to the field army for "Internal Security, North-West Frontier." It will thus be seen that a very large proportion of the available armed force of India was mobilised for this new effort.

For the purposes of the Third Afghan War the field army for the defence of the North-West Frontier was organised in three forces. The first of these, known as the Central Reserve, was to remain at peace stations until required. The second, known as the North-West Frontier Force, was mobilised for service on the frontier between Chitral in the north and the Gomal River in the south. (Later, Waziristan was made a separate command under G.H.Q.) The third, known as the Baluchistan Force, was for service between the Gomal River and any part of Baluchistan that might be threatened. This last was under the command of Lieutenant-General R. Wapshare, C.B., C.S.I., and was composed primarily of the 12th Mounted Brigade (with Headquarters at Baleli, near Quetta) and the 4th Division (with Headquarters at Quetta). The 4th Division was made up of the 10th, 11th, and 57th Infantry Brigades. The 11th Infantry Brigade, under the command of Major-General T. H. Hardy, C.B., was composed as follows :—

1st Battalion the Duke of Wellington's Regiment.
1/22nd Punjabis.
1/4th Gurkhas.
2/10th Gurkhas.

On the 15th May 1919 the Battalion, as part of the 11th Infantry Brigade, left Quetta by rail for

Chaman, a post about eighty miles north-west of Quetta and one and a half miles from the Afghan frontier.

The British officers serving with the Battalion at this time were as follows :—

Lt.-Col. A. B. Tillard, D.S.O., Commanding.
Major L. P. Collins, D.S.O.
Capt. R. V. Brandon.
Capt. C. H. M. Dennys.
Lieut. W. H. Bunning, M.C.
Lieut. W. Russell, M.C.
Lieut. A. S. N. Barron.
Lieut. F. E. C. Hughes.
Lieut. A. R. Sienesi.
Lieut. B. S. Sheldrake.
Lieut. W. D. A. Lentaigne.
Capt. Ormerod, I.M.S.

Afghan troops were reported to be concentrating in strength across the frontier from Chaman, so the following week was spent in the construction of a defensive position round Chaman.

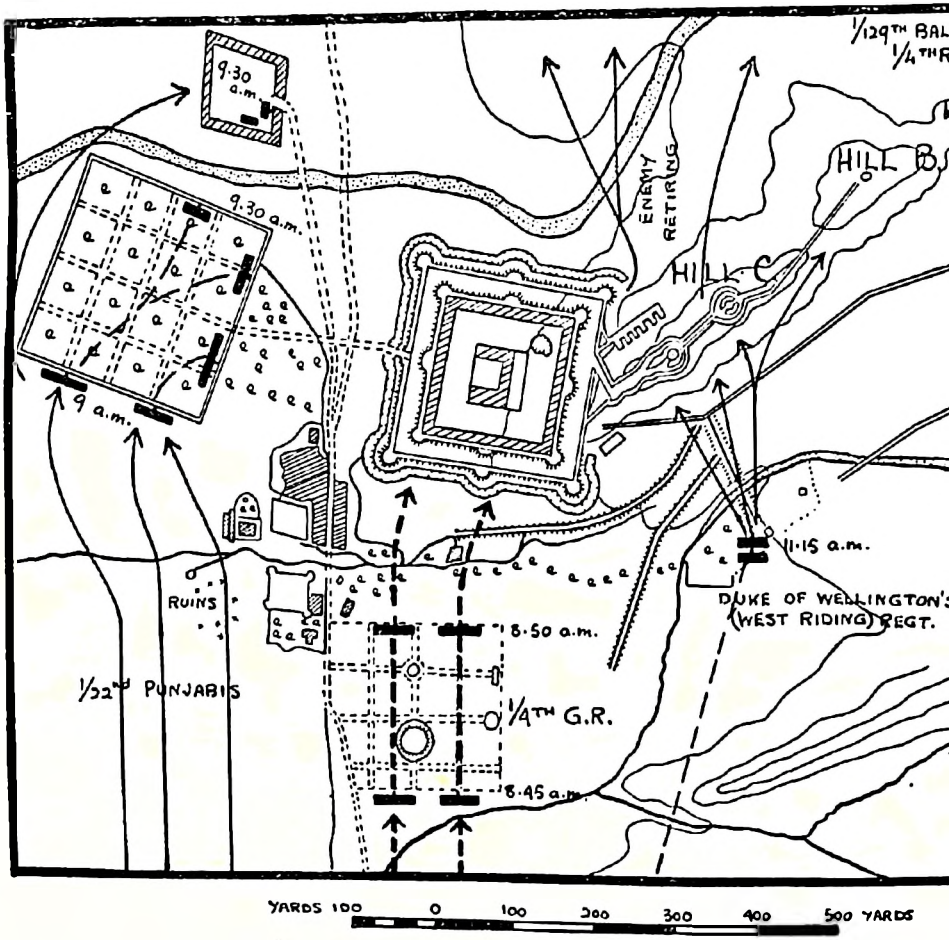
" Lack of transport prevented any extensive invasion of Afghanistan, but it was considered that a moral effect could be obtained by the reduction of Spin Baldak, which lies six miles north-west of New Chaman, and was reputed to be the second strongest fort in Afghanistan."—Official Account.

The fort of Spin Baldak stands on the road from Quetta to Kandahar, between four and five miles within Afghan territory, and guards that road on the Afghan side in the same way that Chaman guards it on the British side. Both Chaman and Spin Baldak lie on the eastern edge of a great plain which stretches gently down in a westerly direction towards the Registan Desert. This plain is broken

by a number of low isolated hills, and it is at the foot of the most easterly of these hills that the village and fort of Spin Baldak are situated.

The fort was built in the form of a square. It had three sets of walls, one within the other, and was surrounded by a moat 25 feet deep and 25 feet broad. " The faces of the outer wall were 250 yards long, and from 25 to 30 feet high. At each corner and in the centre of each face were bastions, and the walls were pierced by two tiers of loopholes "—(Official Account). The second or inner wall was some 5 or 10 feet higher than the outer. Within, again, lay the citadel and the residence of the commander of the garrison. Since the interior of the fort was commanded from the low hill beside it, the Afghans had built a series of three strong towers connecting the fort with the nearest crest of the hill. These towers were joined to each other and to the fort by a double curtain wall. Apart from the towers, the hill had been prepared for defence by the construction of trenches and breastworks. There were three more tactical features worthy of note. The first of these was a walled garden, about 200 yards square, which lay to the south of the fort; to the left of this ran the main road. The second was another walled garden, of about the same size as the first, which lay to the west of the fort. The third was a small but strongly walled serai immediately to the north of the second garden.

General Wapshare decided to take the fort by a surprise attack on the 27th May, and on the 25th May orders were issued for the assault. This was to be undertaken by the 57th Infantry Brigade and


1/129TH BAL
1/4TH R
9:30 a.m.
9:30 a.m.
9 a.m.
ENEMY RETIRING
HILL B
HILL C
1·15 a.m.
DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S (WEST RIDING) REGT.
RUINS
8·50 a.m.
1/4TH G.R.
8·45 a.m.
1/22ND PUNJABIS
YARDS 100 0 100 200 300 400 500 YARDS

SPIN BALDAK

the 11th Infantry Brigade, both then concentrated at Chaman. Of the 57th Infantry Brigade, the 1/4th Royal West Kent Regiment and the 1/129th Baluchis were to advance from the north-east and to capture the hill and the towers. Of the 11th Infantry Brigade, the 1/4th Gurkhas and the 1/22nd Punjabis, under the command of Major-General Hardy, were to advance from the south up the main road and to assault the fort from the south and west respectively. Each column was to have with it two sections of sappers and miners and a section of No. 270 Company, Machine-gun Corps. The 1st Battalion the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, one company of the 2/23rd Sikh Pioneers, and the 2/10th Gurkhas, less one and a half companies, formed part of the general reserve. Two cavalry columns, each with detachments of No. 22 Squadron, Machine-gun Corps, were to make wide detours and take post north, west, and south of the fort to cut off the retreat of the garrison. The attack was to be covered by the fire of all available artillery, amounting to six 18-pounders, two 4.5 howitzers, and four 5-inch howitzers.

At about 4.30 on the morning of the 27th May the force began to move off from Chaman. By 6.30 the assaulting troops were within a few thousand yards of the fort, and commenced to deploy. As the sun rose the whole plain, on a front of two or three miles, was covered with advancing infantry. Ahead the fort stood out massive and formidable in the morning light. Strange sounds seemed to be coming from it, and through their glasses the Battalion's officers could see where, in one of

the bastions, the enemy commander had gathered together his brass band. Clad in white garments the bandsmen were making Afghan martial music with the obvious intention of raising the spirits of the garrison.

A little later the Afghans opened fire. They were armed with large-bore Martini rifles. The Battalion, as it advanced, was just within the extreme range of these weapons, and the men were much amused at the sight of the bullets coming bounding along the ground towards them. They collected large numbers as souvenirs.

In one way, however, this fire had a most unfortunate result. It had been arranged that, before the attack was delivered, an envoy bearing a white flag of truce should ride up to the fort and summon the garrison to surrender. The fire now opened was too much for the Pathan who was acting as the Envoy of Peace, and he was soon seen retiring at full gallop, his white flag of truce trailing on the ground behind him. The Afghan commander did not therefore receive the summons to surrender, which might have resulted in saving much bloodshed caused by our subsequent artillery fire.

As the advance continued the Battalion came within effective range of the enemy's fire. Captain Bunning was slightly wounded in the hand and thigh, and several other casualties were suffered.

About 8 A.M. the artillery bombardment commenced. Almost at once the whole fort was covered with a dense cloud of smoke and dust, through which it was impossible to see what damage was being done. When, at the end of the bombardment,

the dust cloud settled down it was seen with disappointment that, although the inner citadel seemed to have suffered considerably, the comparatively weak artillery available had but little damaged the massive outer walls and bastions of the fort. The G.O.C., therefore, decided to renew the bombardment before committing the infantry to the assault.

The Battalion, meanwhile, had advanced up the right of the main road, and, under cover of the artillery bombardment, had occupied the walled garden south of the fort. It then advanced farther, to within a short distance of the southern wall of the fort, and reconnoitring parties were sent forward to examine the moat and walls and report the best way in. To assist the Battalion to cross the moat and to climb the walls scaling ladders had been issued. The intention was that the men should use the ladders first to climb into the moat, then to get out of it on the far side, and again to scale the walls. The moat, however, was found to be over twenty feet deep, much too deep for the ladders, and proved to be commanded for its whole length on the near side by flanking fire from the bastions. It was fortunate, therefore, that the patrols found other ways of getting into the fort. At one point a narrow causeway crossed the ditch and led to a small door in the outer wall. This door had been bricked up, but a direct hit from a shell had demolished it. It was through this doorway, and through a drainage hole in the western end of the south wall, that the Battalion succeeded in forcing an entry into the fort when the time came for the assault.

Elsewhere the attack had progressed with varying degrees of success. The 1/22nd Punjabis had advanced on the left of the main road, towards the second walled garden, and had occupied that garden and the serai beyond it. They had then prepared for an assault on the western face of the fort, in which was situated the main gate. All their casualties so far, five killed and ten wounded, had been caused by a British aeroplane bomb, intended for the fort, which had fallen on one of their companies. The 1/4th Royal West Kents and the 1/129th Baluchis, attacking the trenches and breastworks on the hill, had for some time been held up by stubborn resistance; but at about 11.15 A.M. they began to make progress, and by mid-day, assisted by the 1st Battalion the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, they completed the capture of the hill and the towers on it.

As soon as the hill had been captured the Battalion and the 1/22nd Punjabis rushed the fort. The Battalion crossed by the causeway, entered the fort through the small doorway and the drainage hole, opened the main gate for the 1/22nd Punjabis, and proceeded to deal with those of the enemy who were still making a stand inside. The enemy had been too shaken by the artillery fire to make any great stand on the walls.

Inside the fort a most deplorable state of affairs was found to exist. The Afghan commander had caused to be brought into what he considered to be the safety of the fort the whole population of the village of Baldak, not to mention their cattle, sheep, donkeys, camels, and all other live stock. These

unfortunate creatures had been the chief sufferers from our artillery fire. The whole interior of the fort was found to be littered with dead and dying human beings and animals.

There were still some Afghan soldiers and other armed men lurking in the rooms under the walls. Of these, some showed a tendency to fight and had to be dealt with by bombing, while the rest merely had to be extracted from the holes and corners in which they were hiding and made prisoners. The confusion that for some time reigned in the fort was not lessened by a burst of fairly severe Lewis-gun fire directed on to the interior of the fort by our own troops on the hill on the right flank. These had failed to realise that the fort had been overrun by our troops, and their fire was intended to cover the assault.

When things were beginning to settle down a little, Brigade Headquarters entered the fort, and the work of consolidation and clearing was quickly put in hand. The prisoners were led away, and the place was cleared of dead and dying and made ready for handing over to the 57th Infantry Brigade, part of which was to remain as a garrison.

At about 5 P.M., after a long and tiring day, the remainder of the force, including the Battalion, began its march back to Chaman.

The casualties suffered by the Battalion on this day were almost negligible: killed, two Gurkha other ranks; wounded, one British officer and two Gurkha other ranks. It is nevertheless worthy of note that had the Afghan garrison displayed the bravery and devotion to duty that would, as a matter of course,

have been expected of a British force of the same strength in similar circumstances, the 11th Brigade and the rest of our force would have suffered heavy casualties in the assault.

Our artillery had raised a great cloud of dust and had severely damaged the citadel in the centre of the fort, but the main defences were practically undamaged. In the massive walls of the main building and of the towers on the hill were deep casements where the defenders could have remained in perfect safety during the bombardment. When the bombardment ceased they could have come out, manned their defences, and, firing through their loopholes at short range, have shot down our troops as they attempted to cross the ditch or scale the walls.

It afterwards appeared that, during an early stage of the attack, the Afghan commander, together with a large part of the garrison, made his escape through a small door in the north face of the fort. After a running fight with our cavalry this party escaped into the hills. The Afghan commander had allowed himself to be intimidated by the sight of two brigades advancing across the plain and by the artillery fire. He deserted his post, leaving therein the unfortunate civilians whom he had gathered in from the village. It was reported later that he was severely tortured on his arrival in Kandahar as a punishment for his cowardice.

The Battalion was congratulated by the Brigade and Divisional Commanders for the spirit and dash with which it had carried out its task and for being the first troops to enter the fort.

Third Afghan War, 1919

Lieutenant-Colonel A. B. Tillard, D.S.O., was awarded the C.B.E.; Major L. P. Collins, D.S.O., was awarded the O.B.E.; and Lieutenant A. R. Sienesi was awarded the Military Cross.

The following were awarded the Indian Distinguished Service Medal :—

Jemadar Pahal Sing Gurung.
No. 4486 Havildar (later Subadar) Bans Thapa.
No. 4243 Havildar Khamba Sing Gurung.

while the following were mentioned in despatches :—

No. 96 Naik Tikaram Thapa.
No. 4917 Naik Ransur Rana.
No. 4987 Rifleman Panchsuba Gurung.
No. 641 Rifleman Nathu Sing Sen.
No. 1331 Rifleman Narbir Kharka.

The capture of Fort Spin Baldak constituted the only major action fought by the Baluchistan Force, for that force, owing to lack of transport, remained more or less immobile during the remainder of the campaign. The Battalion accordingly spent the rest of the war either on garrison duty at Fort Spin Baldak or else constructing or garrisoning an elaborate scheme of defences round Chaman.

In the meantime the war had spread the whole length of the frontier.

In the Khyber there had been some heavy fighting, in which British troops had first checked the Afghans and then defeated them. Noteworthy in this action was the exploit of "D" Company of the 2nd Battalion, under Captain N. Burgan, M.C., which formed part of the 2/11th Gurkhas. On the 11th of May, in the action at Bagh Springs above Landi Khana, this company played a leading part,

and actually captured two Afghan mountain guns. The Afghan gunners, more gallant than their comrades of the infantry, stood stoutly by their guns and were killed in their defence. For his gallantry and leadership in this action Captain Burgan received a bar to his M.C. The guns were presented to the 2nd Battalion by the 2/11th Gurkhas on the disbandment of that Battalion, and are now in Bakloh.

Fighting also occurred throughout the length of the frontier from Chitral, through Mohmand country and the Khyber, to Kohat and the Kurram, and again in Waziristan down to the Zhob. As far as the regular Afghan forces were concerned, hostilities virtually ended on the 3rd June when an armistice was granted to the Amir by the Viceroy of India. Peace was eventually signed on 8th August, but by this time the tribesmen were thoroughly disturbed and excited, and in Northern and Southern Waziristan particularly they broke loose from all control. There now commenced that endless series of raids and outrages which was to necessitate three and a half years of almost continuous operations in Waziristan—operations in which the Battalion was later to play a useful part.

As far as the Baluchistan Force, and therefore the Battalion, was concerned, the armistice only made things more difficult at Chaman than they had been before. Afghan troops continued to occupy the country immediately north of Chaman. The water supply of Fort Spin Baldak was interfered with, and parties working on the outer line of the Chaman defences were continually fired on by Afghan regulars and tribesmen. In the circum-

Third Afghan War, 1919

stances it was naturally extremely difficult to keep the peace, and about the middle of July preparations were made for a strong attack on the Afghan forces in the vicinity of Chaman. This attack never materialised, however, owing to the opening of the peace negotiations at Dakka on the 24th July and the signing of the Peace Treaty on the 8th August. After the latter date all enemy activity round Chaman ceased. A week later Fort Spin Baldak was handed back to the Afghans, and British troops began to leave the Chaman front.

During August 1919 the Battalion returned to Quetta.

That the Battalion had made a first-rate impression during the Afghan campaign is amply shown by the following letter, dated from Quetta the 14th June 1919, from Major-General T. H. Hardy, C.B., to the officer commanding the 1/4th Gurkhas :—

"On vacating command of the 11th Infantry Brigade, owing to ill-health, Major-General T. H. Hardy, C.B., wishes to convey to all of the 1/4th Gurkha Rifles his great appreciation of the work of all ranks in their endeavours to maintain the high standard of efficiency which they have kept up while under his command.

"It has been a very great pleasure to Major-General Hardy to have had the 1/4th Gurkha Rifles in his Brigade, and to have gone on Active Service with them, during which time officers and men have acquitted themselves right well ; and it is with much regret he is forced to sever his connection with the Regiment and to part with so many good friends.

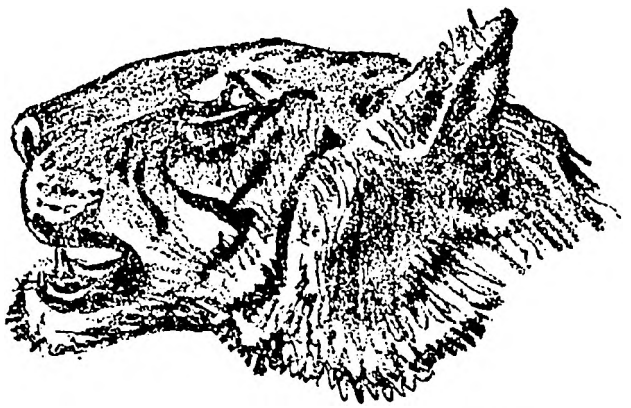
"The Regiment has good traditions, and Major-General Hardy feels sure that these traditions will always be maintained ; and in wishing all ranks good-bye he trusts that they will add still further laurels to their name."

During the year 1919 the Battalion suffered the following battle casualties :—

Third Afghan War, 1919

Killed.—5 Gurkha other ranks.

Wounded.—1 British officer and 4 Gurkha other ranks.

For the Battalion's services during the Third Afghan War the Regiment was granted the Battle Honour " Afghanistan, 1919."

END OF VOLUME I.